

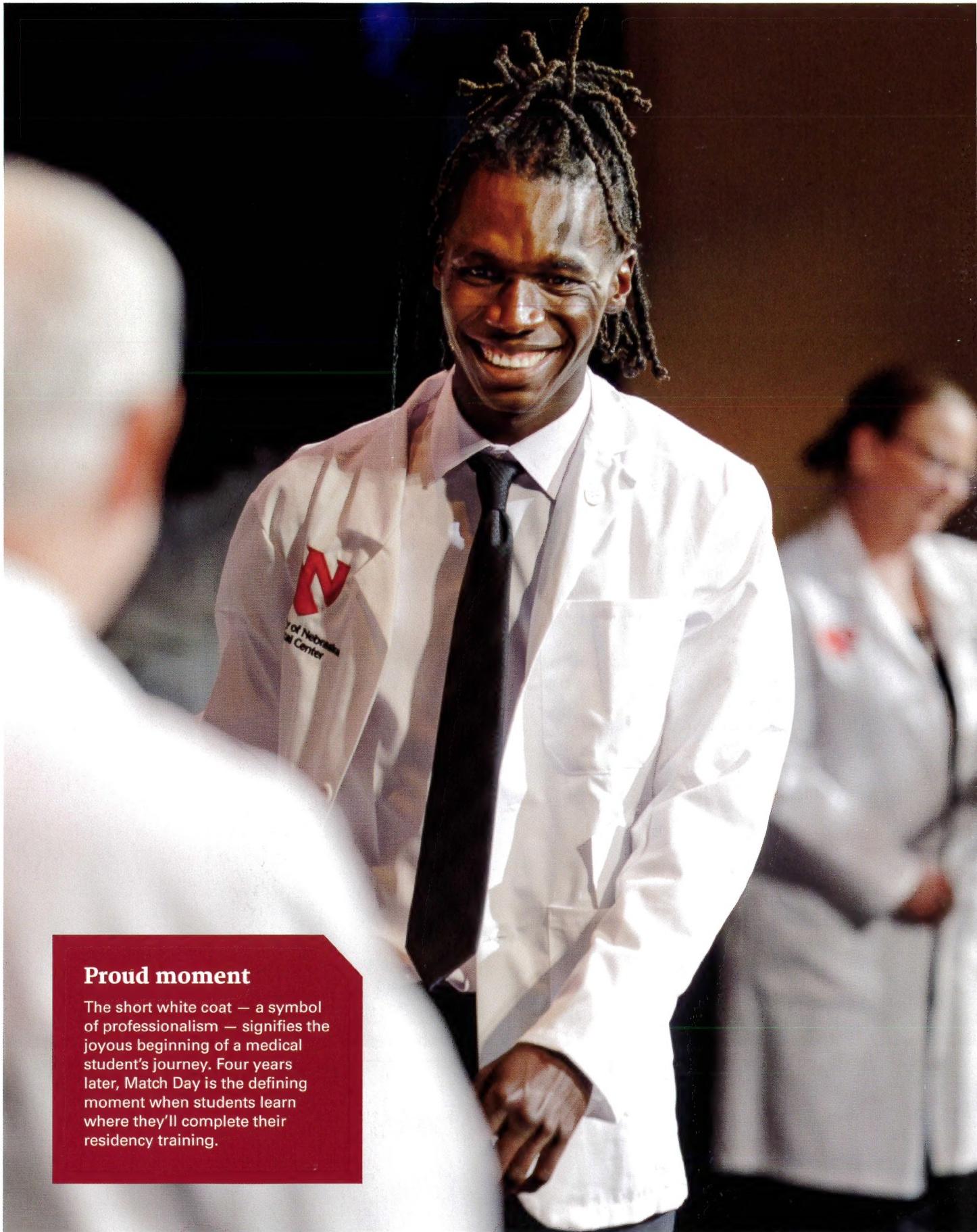
Connect

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF UNMC

ALSO INSIDE
Researchers drive
science with grit
and resolve.

The **MAGICIANS** *of MEDICAL IMAGERY*





Proud moment

The short white coat — a symbol of professionalism — signifies the joyous beginning of a medical student's journey. Four years later, Match Day is the defining moment when students learn where they'll complete their residency training.

Reflections on a decade of progress at UNMC

Jeffrey P. Gold, MD

UNMC Chancellor

Welcome to another edition of UNMC Connect magazine. This one is especially meaningful to me after 10 years as chancellor of this remarkable institution. It's been quite a decade for all of us!

My first day on the job was Feb. 1, 2014. But I can recall that it was the very day of my investiture as chancellor, Sept. 5, 2014, that a plane flew in from Africa to Omaha. And our Nebraska Biocontainment Unit answered the call to treat a patient with Ebola. The activity, growth, momentum, and national and international recognition haven't stopped since.

We're so grateful to have had you along with us throughout this journey.

Much of it has been chronicled throughout the pages of UNMC Connect.

One of my perks as chancellor is a sneak preview of each issue, and I can't wait to tell you a little more about some of the stories you are about to read. They highlight select points of pride from the past year and are sure to leave you feeling even more delighted about your association with UNMC.

We'll introduce you to new deans and directors, who have taken the helms at nursing, dentistry and cancer research. We know you'll be just as excited about their respective arrivals as we are.

You'll also find an outgoing (though we are lucky enough to keep him around as a researcher and faculty member) interview with Ken Cowan, MD, PhD, who reflects upon his nearly 25 years of leadership of the Eppley Institute and Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center.

We'll highlight the remarkable work of the iEXCEL visualization team, catch up with past student senate presidents and showcase the drive of four female researchers, each of whom is making unique contributions to society and science.

You'll get a taste of the role nutrition plays in medicine, and how critical it is to good health; and, we'll catch up on the Global Center for Health Security's rising importance since that fateful day in 2014.

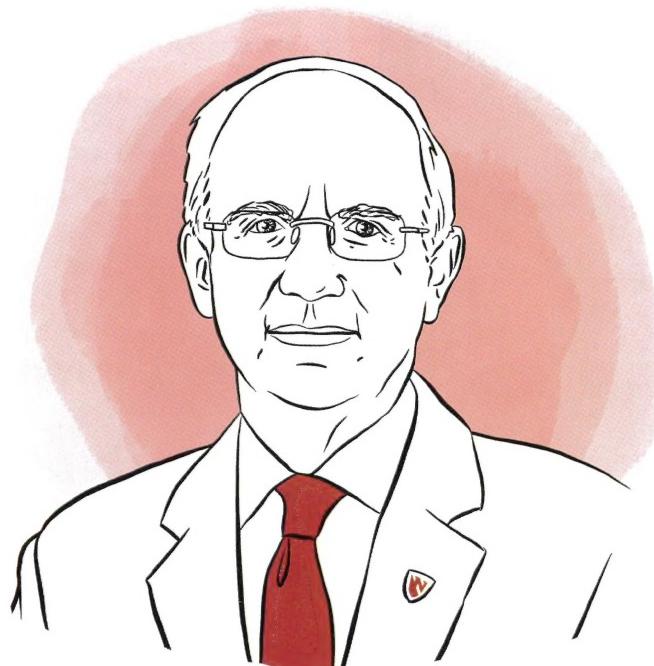
And, perhaps my favorite story of this issue: We'll sit down with Laurie Salonen, who has been described as the "heart" of our liver transplant program.

As Bud Shaw, MD, said recently. "Performing a liver transplant is easy compared to a lot of things she did."

It's quite a walk down memory lane with a special view into the future.

Each issue reminds us of all that we have done, and all we have yet to do. The future is truly bright for our medical center, and I am so pleased you are on the journey with us! 🩺

At presstime, Dr. Gold was the priority candidate to serve as the ninth president of the University of Nebraska. The appointment was subject to a vote of the NU Board of Regents following a mandatory 30-day public review period.



Listen to the
"Health Care
Heart to Heart"
podcast with
Dr. Gold,
available on
major streaming
platforms.



Inside

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BLANKET OF WHITE
Jun Kaneko's "Search" tower is a bright spot on the UNMC/Nebraska Medicine campus. Here, it stands tall on a wintry white carpet in early 2024.

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UNMC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (HLC-NCA) and enjoys full accreditation of all its professional academic programs.

We are Nebraska Medicine and UNMC. Our mission is to lead the world in transforming lives to create a healthy future for all individuals and communities through premier educational programs, innovative research and extraordinary patient care.

UNMC does not discriminate in its academic, employment or admissions programs, and abides by all federal regulations pertaining to same.

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The population we care for and about should not be invisible.

Karoly Mircics, MD, PhD,
director of the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute and one of 30 individuals worldwide who sit on the Board of Directors of Special Olympics International.



“I’ve learned the people of Nebraska truly are depending on us here at UNMC to provide the workforce that they need.”

Lepaine Sharp-McHenry, DNP,
dean of the UNMC College of Nursing



“Even before I came here, I started feeling welcome.”

Chydubem Nwaiwu, MD (“Benz” to his friends), on his internal medicine residency at UNMC. A Maryland native raised in Nigeria from the Igbo tribe, he attended the Ross University School of Medicine in Barbados, before setting foot in Omaha for the first time in the summer of 2023.

“You’ve got to have that grit to take the seed of an idea and make it through the highs and lows.”



Ken Bayles, PhD,
vice chancellor for research, addressing the long journey of taking an innovation from an idea to a commercialized technology.

“This is an incredible honor. I am enormously grateful and...pleased to be the fourth woman to receive this award in the 58 years it has been given. Let’s hope we see many more in the future.”

Susan Swindells, MBBS, who received the Infectious Diseases Society of America’s 2023 Alexander Fleming Award for Lifetime Achievement.

“Nebraska was not on my radar.”

Gerard “Gerry” Kugel, DMD, PhD, on making his Boston-to-Nebraska move in September 2023 to become dean of the UNMC College of Dentistry.

DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY CONTRACT

\$24.5
MILLION



Researchers from UNMC and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with guidance and administration from the National Strategic Research Institute, are advancing development of a first-of-its-kind prophylactic to help protect U.S. troops from the effects of acute radiation syndrome. To launch the next steps of this work, the Defense Health Agency awarded a \$24.5 million contract to NSRI, the Department of Defense University Affiliated Research Center of U.S. Strategic Command and the University of Nebraska System.

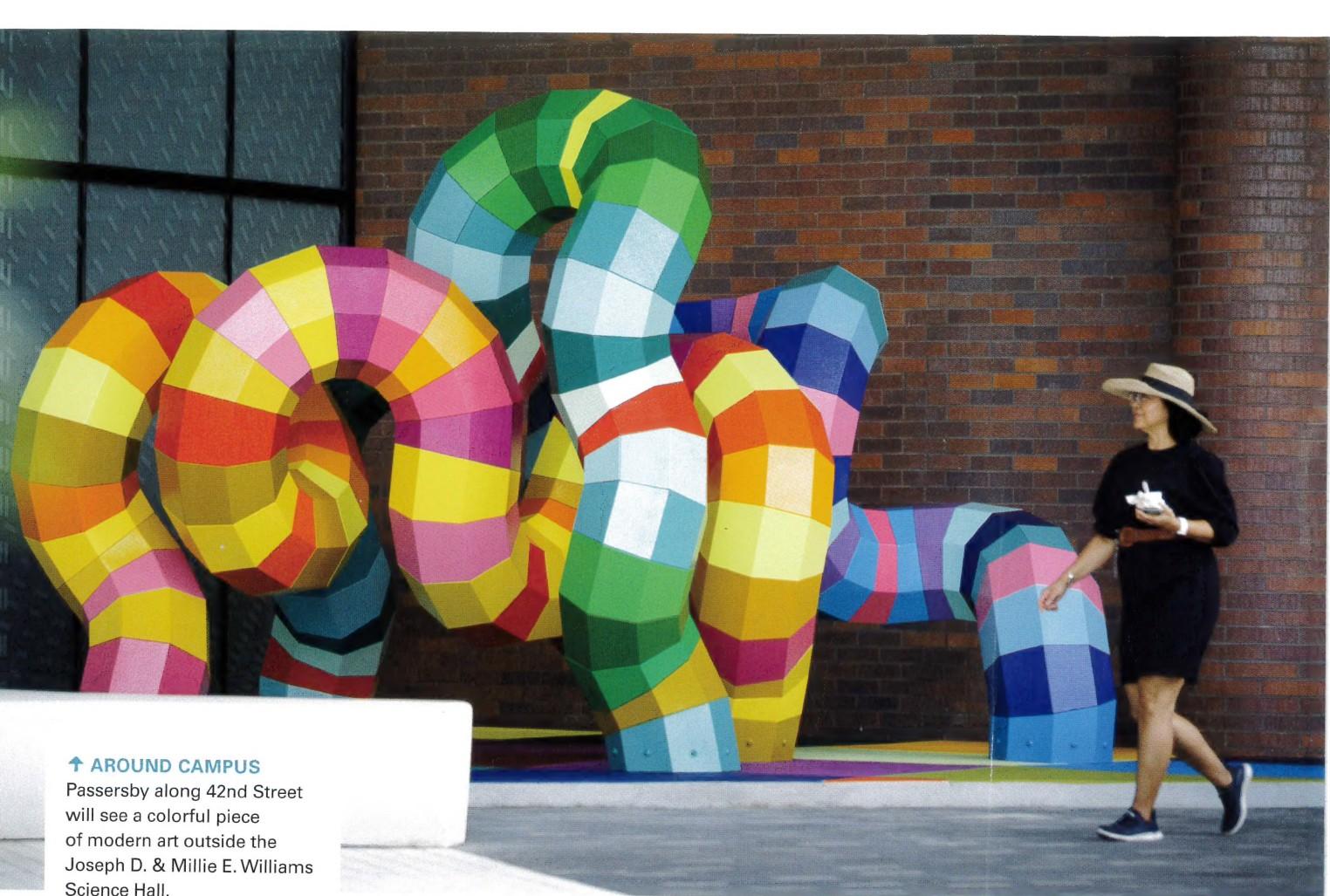


“This is an example of the national impact that is possible when the University of Nebraska System’s top investigators collaborate across the individual institutions.

Jeffrey P. Gold, MD
UNMC chancellor

From left, David Berkowitz, PhD, co-principal investigator, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Maj. Gen. USAF (Ret.) Rick Evans, National Strategic Research Institute; and Ken Bayles, PhD, co-principal investigator, UNMC.

- @UNMC_AA
- @UNMCAlum
- @unmcalumni
- @UNMCAA



▲ AROUND CAMPUS

Passersby along 42nd Street will see a colorful piece of modern art outside the Joseph D. & Millie E. Williams Science Hall.

The whimsical geometric installation — titled *De Nobis Abundans* ("Abounds in Us") — was commissioned to capture the spirit of the Williams Science Hall, which houses an array of student services. The artist, Shasti O'Leary Soudant, fashioned the sculpture from sections of stainless steel, powder coated in industrial-grade pigments.

The Buffalo-based artist has designed a dozen works of public art, as well as book covers for Stephen King, James Patterson, Jodi Picoult and other noted authors. The multicolor *De Nobis Abundans* "celebrates the intent of research medicine to investigate the mysteries that abound within us all," Soudant said in her artist's statement.

PHOTO BY KENT STEVENS

PARTNERSHIPS

Students, Communities Benefit

In 2023, UNMC signed master affiliation agreements that benefit future health professions students and rural Nebraska communities.

In North Platte, UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, signed an agreement with Great Plains Health hospital system that enables UNMC health professions students from all colleges to do critically important clinical rotations at GPHealth.

UNMC leaders hope the agreement, and expanded rotations, help address health workforce shortages in western and rural Nebraska.

UNMC leaders also signed an agreement with Columbus Community Hospital to allow students from programs including allied health, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health to participate in clinical training opportunities at Columbus Community Hospital.

"Over the years, we have had a great collaborative relationship with UNMC," said Michael T. Hansen, president and CEO of the hospital. "By signing the master affiliation agreements for both clinical and non-clinical students, we streamline the process and ensure that our mutual interests are perfectly aligned." 🌟

Health status of urban American Indians gets a boost

Thanks to a 2023 partnership with the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition Health and Wellness Clinic, UNMC College of Nursing faculty provide advanced practice clinical services at the South Omaha clinic.



PHOTO BY TAYLOR WILSON

↑ COMMUNITY OUTREACH In September, members of the North Omaha, UNMC and Nebraska Medicine community gathered to celebrate the opening of the Community Wellness Collaborative, an initiative to improve the health of individuals who live in North Omaha. Located in the Highlander neighborhood, the Community Wellness Collaborative provides support and resources through education, training and building career pathways. "I hope this collaboration is a demonstration of our willingness to do whatever we can ... to reduce the impact of health disparities," said Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, UNMC chancellor.

LEADERSHIP

UNMC welcomes trio of leaders

Lepaine Sharp-McHenry, DNP, joined the UNMC College of Nursing in July, after having served as dean of the College of Natural, Behavioral and Health Sciences at Simmons University in Boston since 2019. A practicing nurse since 1981, Dr. Sharp-McHenry succeeds Juliann Sebastian, PhD, who retired after serving as UNMC's nursing dean for 12 years.

Gerard "Gerry" Kugel, DMD, PhD, associate dean for research and professor of comprehensive care at Tufts University School of

Dental Medicine in Boston, joined the UNMC College of Dentistry in September. While in Boston, he maintained a private dental practice and has extensive expertise in clinical research and esthetic dentistry. He succeeds Janet Guthmiller, DDS, PhD, who served as dean from September 2014 until fall 2022 when she became dean of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Adams School of Dentistry.

Joann Sweasy, PhD, an internationally recognized comprehensive cancer center director and an expert in the genetics, cell biology and

biochemistry of DNA repair, joined UNMC in November as director of the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center and the Eppley Institute for Research in Cancer and Allied Diseases. A National Institutes of Health-funded researcher since 1994, Dr. Sweasy served as director of the University of Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson, where she led the center to renewal of its National Cancer Institute-Comprehensive designation in 2022. She succeeds

UNMC's Ken Cowan, MD, PhD, who led the cancer center since 1999. ♦



Dr. Kugel



Dr. Sweasy



Dr. Sharp-McHenry



The ISTARI tent concept allows medical teams to administer care without direct exposure to highly transmissible infectious diseases.

INNOVATION

UNMC portable unit now FDA-approved

Good news on a story shared in the spring 2022 issue of Connect: A revolutionary portable unit to safely treat patients with highly contagious diseases has received approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

As a result, the Isolation System for Treatment and Agile Response for High-Risk Infections (ISTARI) Model 1B, developed by UNMC and Otherlab, an independent research and design lab, is now available for patient care in diverse settings when sold by the team's commercialization partner, Carecubes Inc.

The device is intended to facilitate safe and effective care of patients with highly transmissible infections in a variety of environments, from small rural to metropolitan referral hospitals, as well as resource-limited international sites.

"This is an advance that will save lives," said James Lawler, MD, associate director of the Global Center for Health Security at UNMC. "The portability, ease of set-up and tear-down, and tested effectiveness allows for an array of practical uses across the health care system. This also can revolutionize management of dangerous infections in austere environments, providing better patient care in challenging conditions and protecting health care workers."

The ISTARI Model 1B is one of a suite of devices designed to manage highly transmissible infection patients from initial encounter through transport and to definitive care at a referral center. The ISTARI concept can be applied to high-consequence infectious diseases, such as Ebola, and equally to more commonly encountered transmissible infectious diseases such as COVID, tuberculosis and chickenpox. Over time, the ISTARI team plans to submit other models for FDA approval.

"The ISTARI concept is revolutionary," Dr. Lawler said. "It allows immediate and persistent access to the patient with no need for PPE once the patient is inside the tent." 🌟

UNK-UNMC PARTNERSHIP

New era for rural health care

UNMC leaders took part in a September 2023 groundbreaking ceremony in Kearney for the new UNK-UNMC Rural Health Education Building, designed to grow Nebraska's rural health care workforce and help communities thrive.

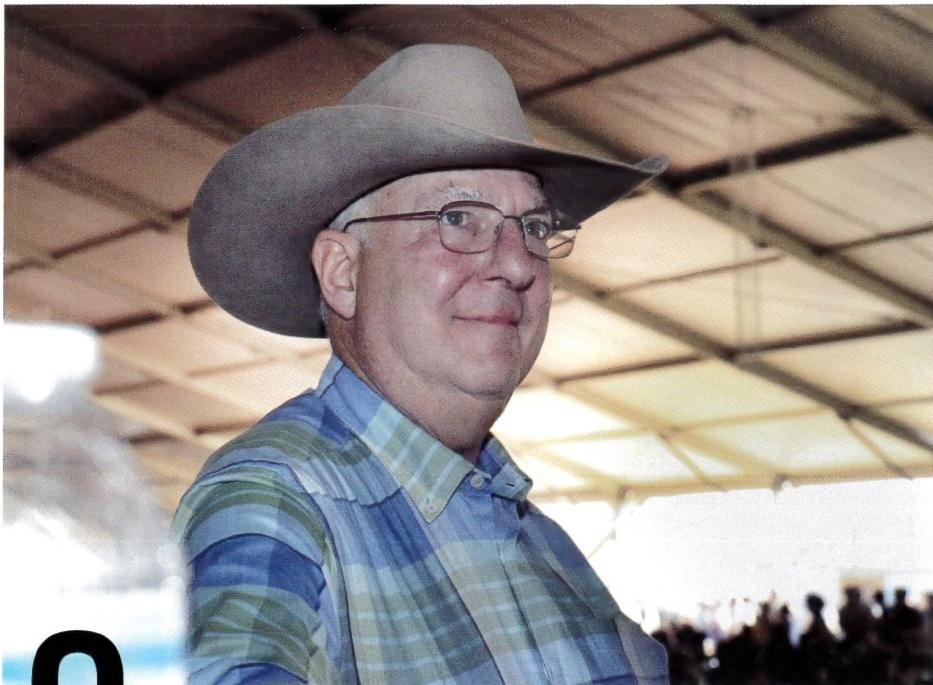
"Our goal is to harness UNMC's world-class skills to transform rural Nebraska through a unique endeavor not seen elsewhere in the United States: educating health care workers and professionals in rural areas," University of Nebraska at Kearney Chancellor Doug Kristensen said at the time. "The Rural Health Education Building will be a game-changer in this respect, serving a crucial role in filling shortages in all medical professions across Nebraska."

Located on the UNK campus, the \$95 million facility will allow UNMC to expand the presence of its allied health and nursing programs while launching programs to train physicians, pharmacists and public health professionals in Kearney.

Completion is expected in late 2025 with occupancy in early 2026. Students will be able to enroll in the expanded programs beginning in fall 2025, using existing UNK facilities until the new building opens. The facility will train more than 300 students and be operated by UNMC. 🌟



In December 2023, the NU Board of Regents approved naming the Rural Health Education Complex for UNK Chancellor Doug Kristensen, an ardent champion for greater Nebraska. The Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex on UNK's west campus includes an existing building, which opened in 2015, and the Rural Health Education Building now under construction. The naming request fulfills the wishes of the project's lead philanthropic supporter, the William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation.



Q & A

For almost 25 years, Dr. Cowan has been the face of cancer care at the med center.

Ken Cowan, MD, PhD, joined UNMC in 1999 as director of the then Eppley Cancer Center (now the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center) and the Eppley Institute for Cancer Research. Although he recently stepped down as an administrator, he remains a full-time faculty member and clinician.

Q: What made you decide to focus your career on fighting cancer?

A: Both my parents had cancer. During my graduate research for my MD/PhD, I studied the molecular regulation of viruses that caused cancer in animals. During my clinical training in internal medicine, I became interested in oncology and new chemotherapeutic agents to treat cancer.

Q: What stands out when you reflect on almost 25 years of leading the cancer center and Eppley Institute?

A: The recruitment of over 250 cancer research and clinical faculty,

to UNMC and Nebraska Medicine, the three-fold growth in cancer research funding, expansion of the cancer clinical trials program, and the overwhelming public and private support to build the new integrated Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center, including the C.L. Werner Cancer Hospital and the Suzanne and Walter Scott Cancer Research Tower.

Q: As director, you continued to see patients. Why?

A: Seeing cancer patients and their families each week strengthened my resolve to find ways to expand our cancer research programs and to facilitate the transfer of

scientific discoveries from the lab into the clinic and beyond as quickly as possible.

Q: What lessons have you learned from your patients?

A: Their courage and bravery have been inspirational to me. I have enjoyed learning about their lives and their families. Patients have taught me to appreciate every day and to be there for others.

Q: What has been most gratifying about the Cattlemen's Ball? And, how many cowboy hats do you own?

A: The Cattlemen's Ball of Nebraska, which started 26 years ago, is an outstanding partnership with the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. Held on a different ranch each year, it highlights the beauty of rural Nebraska, raises awareness about cancer and raises funds for cancer research. I have two cowboy hats, including one handmade from a beaver pelt.

Q: How has the cancer landscape changed since your arrival in 1999?

A: We have expanded both outreach programs and access to clinical trials to patients across Nebraska. In collaboration with Nebraska Medicine, Kearney soon will have a new cancer clinic and treatment center.

Q: How has the med center's approach to cancer changed because of the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center facility?

A: The facility has created a transformational environment for cancer research and cancer care, placing researchers and clinicians side by side to promote interdisciplinary cancer research and multidisciplinary care for all patients. The incredible Healing Arts program throughout the new cancer center facility provides hope and inspiration to everyone.

UNMC fast facts



Students enrolled for the 2023-24 school year, which marks the 23rd consecutive year that UNMC has admitted a record class.

10

Years Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, has served as UNMC's eighth chancellor. Dr. Gold joined UNMC on Feb. 1, 2014.

**\$252.7
MILLION**

Total research expenditures, which includes all sponsored and research projects (fiscal year 2023). Total sponsored and state-aided research projects (a subset of above) topped **\$202 million**.

6,383

Employed by UNMC as of February 2024.

**\$95
MILLION**

Investment in UNMC's Rural Health Education Building on the UNK campus, which will allow more health care students to study and train in central Nebraska. This facility, now under construction, joins an existing building, which opened in 2015, and makes up the Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex.

**\$11.8
MILLION**

Amount awarded to UNMC's Center for Heart and Vascular Research by the National Institutes of Health to create a Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) focused on finding answers for heart and vascular diseases. The center is led by Rebekah Gundry, PhD. The award marks UNMC's third funded COBRE.

**\$970
MILLION**

UNMC's operating budget for 2023-24 (17.3% STATE-SUPPORTED)

Salonen retires with legacy unmatched

by Aimee Grindstaff



The medical center's liver failure and transplant program would not exist today without the longstanding contributions of Laurie Salonen. A transplant coordinator, Salonen founded the program alongside Byers "Bud" Shaw, MD, in 1985 and then championed its success. This past January — 38 years after joining the med center — Salonen retired, leaving behind a legacy that is unmatched.

Early days

Salonen knew early in her career she wanted to help children, and went on to work in the pediatric intensive care units at CS Mott Children's Hospital at the University of Michigan and Children's Hospital University of Illinois in Chicago.

"My favorite patients were the teenagers," Salonen said. "They're very resilient because they don't want to be sick. Kids just want to be normal — they want to play and interact. That's why I ended up in pediatrics."

It was luck that brought her to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in 1982, she said, where she served as a clinical nurse specialist for all surgical patients in the pediatric hospital. The facility had established the nation's first pediatric liver transplant program. Because the procedure was new and somewhat controversial then, there was not an organized system in place to guide nurses on how to provide a standard of care.

"Here were these very sick kids who had a huge operation, and none

of the nurses knew what to do," she said. "They brought them back and stuck them in a bed and that was that — it was chaotic. I advocated that they needed somebody to teach nurses how to take care of these patients and support their families."

Her passion for patient care led her to establish the first liver transplant coordinator role for the hospital.

Joining UNMC

Salonen went on to develop this same role at UNMC (prior to the hospital merger that created Nebraska Medicine) when she and Dr. Shaw were recruited to establish the liver failure and transplant program in 1985. The program was only the fifth of its kind in the country, and it quickly became the second busiest. Salonen played an integral role in the program's success.

"Laurie was probably the most important individual in the whole program," Dr. Shaw said. "Performing a liver transplant is easy compared to a lot of things she did."

From the beginning, Salonen

established a culture among transplant nurses centered on her core belief: always do what's right for the patient.

The patient-first culture she created is a primary reason the liver transplant program is so highly respected among other health care systems across the country. Many have modeled their transplant coordinator roles after the one she built.

"What she does for patients is above and beyond," transplant coordinator April Romans said at the time of Salonen's retirement. "She makes relationships with them and knows their history."

In 2014, UNMC's Salonen moved over to Nebraska Medicine because more than 80 percent of her job activities involved clinical care.

This spring, an anonymous donor established the Nebraska Medicine Laurel Williams Salonen Endowed Nursing Fund to support professional development for solid organ transplant coordinators and nursing staff. Donate at nufoundation.org.

Staying Connected

It's no surprise Salonen has grown close to her patients over the years. She still follows more than 400 of them, sending them holiday cards and greetings each year. And, she most treasures a folder of emails and cards received from them. "It's been humbling and rewarding to have had an impact on so many people's lives." One of those patients: James Redford, the late son of actor Robert Redford.

MASCOT

DID YOU KNOW...

The mascot was unveiled April 27, 2023, and was based on Ellie, a 16-year-old black Labrador that had attended campus events over the years.

The graphic image of the Lab plays on UNMC's clinical care and research, along with the dog breed's loyal, curious and caring nature.

Lab merchandise continues to fly off the UNMC Bookstore shelves. The most popular items to date? T-shirts and sweatshirts, of course.



The winning concept — of a dog wearing goggles and a white coat — was submitted by Caroline Seilstad, a UNMC graduate studies student.

The official Lab logo — with a dog wearing a leaped white coat — was designed under the auspices of the creative staff in UNMC Strategic Communications. Shout out to UNMC senior graphic designer Tom Waples and freelance illustrator Ananda Walden for bringing "Ellie" to life.

Livin' Large: Go, Labs!

Thanks to a student-led initiative, the University of Nebraska's academic medical center — known for producing not student-athletes, but student-health care leaders — has officially claimed the Labrador retriever as its mascot.

"We are honored to be the UNMC Labs," said Nicole Kent, who was student senate president and student regent at the time of the mascot reveal. "The mascot gives UNMC students something that connects us and something to rally behind as a UNMC community." 🐕



Photo: UNMC Strategic Communications



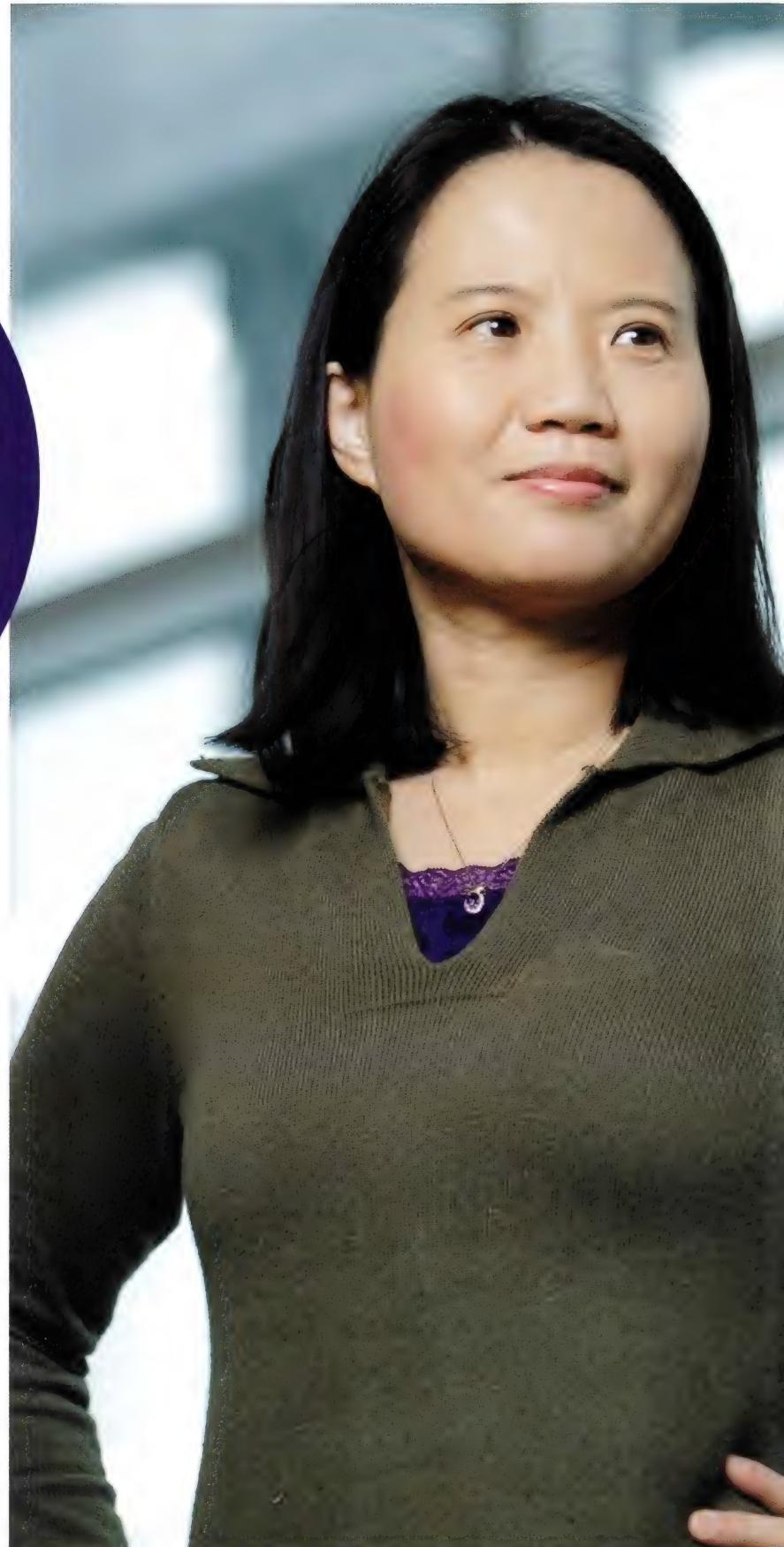
Visit unmcbookstore.com to nab your own UNMC Labs gear

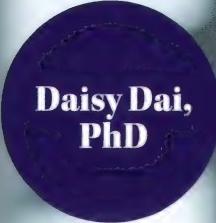
Collective Impact

Meet four trailblazers in UNMC's powerhouse contingent of women in STEM

The University of Nebraska Medical Center boasts a formidable cohort of women who drive scientific exploration and advance modern medicine in Nebraska and beyond. These visionary researchers and innovators are propelled by grit, resilience and personal resolve to “find a better way.” Among them: Beth Beam, PhD; Rebekah Gundry, PhD; Breanna Hetland, PhD; and Hongying “Daisy” Dai, PhD.

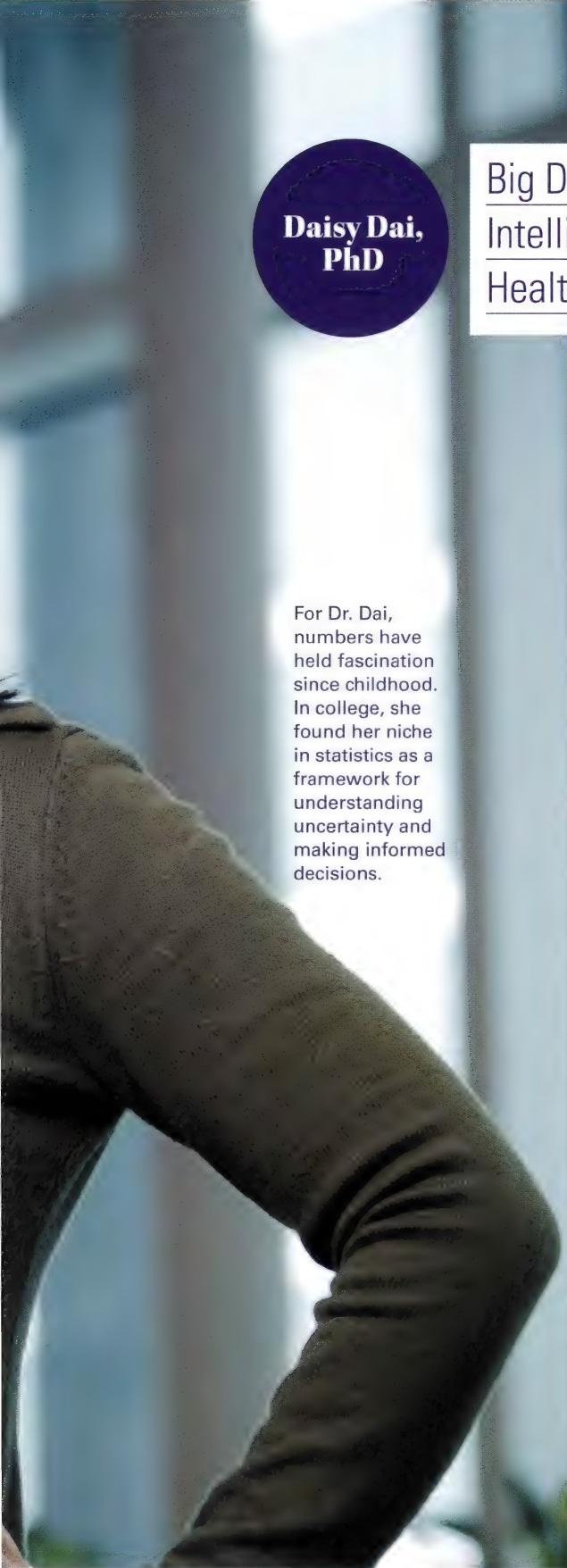
Stories by Chris Christen
Photos by Kent Sievers





Daisy Dai,
PhD

Big Data, Artificial Intelligence & Public Health Advocacy



For Dr. Dai, numbers have held fascination since childhood. In college, she found her niche in statistics as a framework for understanding uncertainty and making informed decisions.

For two decades, Hongying “Daisy” Dai’s STEM research has been fueled by a passion for collecting big data and translating it into tangible benefits for society.

Armed with a bachelor’s degree in economics, master’s degrees in mathematics and statistics and a PhD in statistics, Dr. Dai spent the first 10 years of her career in Kansas City, teaching biostatistics and crunching numbers for pediatricians and cancer specialists in labs at the University of Missouri and Children’s Mercy Hospital.

As a research assistant, “I realized the limitations of waiting for data to be handed to me,” she said, adding: “I wanted to break the mold” as a lead investigator in population health — an emerging field combining STEM, public health and medicine.

“When there’s a knowledge gap or an emerging health concern, I step up” with a hypothesis and a research model.

Social media and generative AI are crucial tools in Dr. Dai’s own research into substance use, particularly among adolescents and racial minorities.

Currently, she is examining transition patterns of adolescents who experiment with substances once or twice for the allure and later progress to addictive and hazardous substances. “When kids start to use these substances, it’s very hard for them to break free.”

Her study findings have spurred proactive efforts, including a free substance training program in Omaha-area schools focusing on e-cigarettes, an emerging concern in youth health.

“I like to catch new things from various sources,” Dr. Dai said of her ongoing monitoring of online attitudes toward public policies, maternal health, chronic diseases and much more. She also monitors health-related misinformation on platforms like X and TikTok. For each study, she noted, “we analyze millions of tweets and posts,” leveraging AI technology to gain deeper insights into patterns and risks.

“Statistics, to me, is not only a tool for data analysis but also a powerful lens ... The world is changing fast ... The sky is the limit for the impact we can make.”

“Sometimes the big data is so broad and new, it gets national media attention,” Dr. Dai said. “By disseminating our findings widely, we amplify our impact and catalyze meaningful change in public health policy and practice.”

•••

In 2001, Dr. Dai left China and arrived in the United States as a graduate student at the University

of Kentucky in Lexington. There, she was a research assistant to Henrietta Bada-Ellzey, MD, a neonatologist and dedicated researcher in children's health. Under her mentorship, Dr. Dai's passion and perseverance as a researcher flourished.

Dr. Dai joined the UNMC College of Public Health in 2018 as an associate professor of biostatistics and has since been promoted to professor and associate dean of research. She received UNMC's New Investigator Award in 2019, in part, for her research on e-cigarette use and prevention among U.S. teens. In 2023, she was named a UNMC Distinguished Scientist for her work in statistical epidemiology, health disparities and substance use and prevention.

To date, Dr. Dai has participated in studies supported by more than \$60 million in research funding.

Beyond research, Dr. Dai is "deeply committed" to mentoring the next generation of medical and public health professionals. UNMC's Medical Doctorate/Master of Public Health dual degree program is the catalyst. Dr. Dai coordinates the research component.

"Medical students have a passion for society and are interested in having a better understanding of their patients," she said. "This is an emerging trend I didn't see five years ago."

It's important, she said, because in translational medicine, the more a care team understands the root causes of diseases and behaviors, the more they can impact a patient's wellness through holistic approaches.

Dr. Dai also is invested in community outreach and education to empower individuals with knowledge and resources to make informed health decisions, and to raise awareness of emerging health threats and preventive measures.

"The world is changing fast ... The sky is the limit for the impact we can make."



**Breanna
Hetland,
PhD**

Serendipity, Integrated Care & Robotic Seals

Registered nurse scientist Breanna Hetland, PhD, pushes the boundaries of traditional nursing practice, driven by a deep-seeded desire to "humanize" hospitalization.

A native of Illinois, she joined the UNMC College of Nursing as an assistant professor in 2017 — fresh off a postdoctoral fellowship in symptom management and palliative care research in adults with advanced disease at Case Western Reserve's Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing in Cleveland, Ohio.

The fellowship, sponsored by the National Institute of Nursing Research, solidified Dr. Hetland's determination to enhance the patient-family experience in the intensive care unit (ICU). Her father's brainstem stroke in 2013 would

further emphasize the significance of integrating loved ones into the health-care team.

As an ICU nurse, Dr. Hetland understood the challenges faced by patients and their families during acute hospitalization, guiding them through the most traumatic experience of their lives. However, the experience felt totally different when the tables were turned, and she was the family member in the ICU.

As a result, Dr. Hetland and a group of bedside nurses created the first version of the Family Room, an app to empower families to play an active role in day-to-day caregiving and decision-making during an acute hospitalization. The digital resource is designed to enhance outcomes, reduce health-care costs and mark a significant step toward holistic healing within the health-care system.

After a rush of research funding and a serendipitous partnership with an invested co-founder, Greg Nelson, the



business ([familyroom.health](#)) and latest version of the app are nearly ready to meet the world — capping a collaboration since 2018 with UNMC's technology transfer office, UNeMed, and Nebraska's startup incubator and accelerator, UNeTech.

"The app is just the beginning of our vision," Dr. Hetland said. One feature she especially likes is the comprehensive virtual tour of the hospital environment that provides insights into equipment, sounds and procedures. Family caregivers also can communicate real-time observations to clinicians.

"On average, it takes 17 years to turn research into practice. Remarkably, we did it with our prototype in just under six months."

...

For Dr. Hetland, nursing has always been about providing compassionate care: From saving a featherless baby sparrow as a youngster, to exploring STEM careers as a teen, to pivoting from

pre-med to nursing at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and finally, to innovating in health care.

Who knows where she would be today if she hadn't boosted her ACT test score by four points, securing a full-ride, four-year Meridian Scholarship to SIUE? "It's the greatest gift I've ever received," she said, emphasizing that she's now paying forward the generosity to her alma mater.

During her college years, she embarked on a "life-changing" 16-week cultural immersion in China and Tibet, where she delved into the study of holistic health and healing.

As a senior, she heeded her mentor's advice and joined an undergraduate research program, where she excelled.

Additionally, she had a "very intense" Mayo Clinic internship, where she discovered her passion for critical care nursing in a transplant ICU. During this time, she also conducted a small descriptive study on student opinions of holistic healing.

Despite faculty encouragement, Dr. Hetland initially passed on a fast-track BSN-to-PhD degree and returned after graduation to her hometown of Bartonville, Illinois, to work in a medical ICU.

"I loved interacting with patients and families, yet I found myself constantly questioning the rationale behind certain procedures," she said. "I couldn't let go of my need to understand the 'why' behind everything." After just 10 months in her first job as a clinical nurse, she changed course to pursue a PhD.

During doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Hetland worked under Linda Chlan, PhD, who was studying the effects of music therapy on ventilated patients in the ICU.

Concurrently, Dr. Hetland began examining the holistic needs of individuals experiencing acute crisis.

"In the ICU, we focus on saving patients physically, but we frequently overlook their emotional and psychological needs," she said.

"What more can we do to address the holistic well-being of patients? That's the driving force behind every research project I undertake."

...

Dr. Hetland, alongside husband Tyler, remains steadfast in a mostly work-from-home routine that blends structure with flexibility.

"My children have made me a better scientist," she said of Layla, 5, and Tully, 22 months, with another child expected in August.

The day of this interview, the girls had an opportunity to interact with one of Mom's research assistants - Paro, a robotic baby harp seal. Currently undergoing trials with UNMC's clinical partners Nebraska Medicine and Children's Nebraska, the therapeutic seal is earning high marks in the pediatric ICU.

During her postgraduate studies, Dr. Hetland found a partner in holistic acute care in Buddy, a chocolate Labrador retriever she rescued heading into her postgraduate studies. "Our job was to help families through this incredible crisis," she said.

Thanks to Dr. Hetland's critical care expertise, she and Buddy were often granted access to clinical areas rarely visited by animals. Over the span of four years, they dedicated more than 200 service hours together.

Even after the Hetlands relocated to Omaha, Buddy remained a loyal companion. In a cherished photo, he is shown snuggling with newborn Layla, just a few months before he died.

Buddy's impact on patients and families inspired Dr. Hetland to explore innovative ways of integrating animals into the ICU. Her search led to Paro, developed by AIST, a Japanese firm specializing in automations. Building on Paro's potential, Dr. Hetland pursued

funding from the Pediatric Cancer Research Group for a collaborative clinical trial with Nebraska Medicine and the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center.

Within three years, Children's Nebraska initiated a second clinical trial featuring a trio of baby harp seals — Paro, Pepé Le Pew and Pickles. These seals actively participate in physical, occupational and speech therapy sessions, contributing to personalized therapeutic interventions.

"This kind of research fills my cup," Dr. Hetland said. "What began as a side project with Buddy has evolved into a groundbreaking interdisciplinary collaboration. Our work is far from over. The possibilities are limitless."

•••

In May 2023, Dr. Hetland was named to a prestigious national fellowship program for innovative nursing leaders. As the fourth cohort of the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship for Nurse Leaders and Innovators through the University of California-Davis nursing school, Dr. Hetland received a \$500,000 grant to effectively roll out and commercialize the Family Room app.

Dr. Hetland's groundbreaking work has garnered more recognition in recent months, including acceptance into a selective entrepreneur-mentoring program and a Harriet H. Werley New Investigator Award from the Midwest Nursing Research Society.

In 2023, she was accepted into a competitive national entrepreneur-mentoring program, further propelling her efforts to revolutionize intensive care units worldwide.

Her advice to her younger self?

"Follow the Brush," she said, elaborating: "Just follow the stroke that's in front of you. Lean into the unknown and trust your instincts. You can always fix your brushstrokes as you go."

And seize those serendipitous moments, she said. "My life has been filled with them."

**Beth Beam,
PhD**

Dr. Beam, with her prototype for a refined air-purifying helmet to protect health care workers.



PPE, Prototypes & Persistence

As a young child, Beth Beam, PhD, observed her grandparents' unwavering dedication in caring for her great-grandmother at home. As certified nursing assistants, their compassionate example turned the budding STEM enthusiast toward a career in nursing.

Dr. Beam, an Omaha native, entered nursing studies in the late 1990s with an eye toward oncology. She became interested in nursing science while studying fatigue among caregivers and patients undergoing bone marrow transplants. This led to her first job as an oncology research coordinator at UNMC's Lied Transplant Center.

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August 2005, Dr. Beam found herself pivoting in an unexpected direction. "Emergency preparedness was just emerging, and everybody was grasping at straws," she said.

The UNMC College of Nursing received a grant to create interactive videos and simulation drills for bioterrorism and public health emergencies. Dr. Beam, a teaching assistant, joined the project team led by simulation pioneer Patti Carstens.

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The HEROES project's first phase included development of a website primarily for health-care professionals and first responders. Dr. Beam managed the resources section, covering crucial topics like isolation procedures, hazardous material management and mass casualty responses.

During the launch of the HEROES project, Dr. Beam became involved in the Nebraska Biocontainment Unit, led by Phil Smith, MD, a pioneer in biopreparedness and infectious disease research and treatment. Dr. Beam had a

"Don't get so bogged down in what's hard about your work everyday that you forget about what's possible. You may be sitting on the next big idea that will change everything."

career-defining experience serving as the unit's educator when the Ebola crisis hit in 2014 and UNMC/Nebraska Medicine successfully treated three patients infected with the West African virus.

"There was a mix of excitement and trepidation," Dr. Beam said, as frontline responders donned the personal protective equipment ensemble developed by her and her colleagues. It also was a uniquely significant time for Dr. Beam on a personal level. "I was pregnant and remained outside the unit to stay safe at Dr. Smith's insistence."

She concentrated on disseminating information in partnership with the UNMC Colleges of Nursing and Allied Health Professions and the Center for Biopreparedness Education. "We received phone calls from people all over the

world," she said. The HEROES website, now her responsibility as project director, became a critical resource for accessing life-saving tutorials and protocols on demand. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention linked to the HEROES website before their guidance for Ebola protective equipment was ready.

In 2020, at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the biocontainment unit again was activated for care and management of U.S. citizens from Wuhan, China, and the Diamond Princess Cruise ship.

This time, respiratory protection became Dr. Beam's primary focus. "It's the invisible things that can get us," she said, referencing her work to refine the design and functionality of the suits and head-mounted air-purifying respirators worn by caregivers in quarantine units. "There has to be a better way."

A UNeMed grant gave birth to a 3-D printed prototype helmet currently undergoing critique by health-care professionals and others, including National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health experts and Nebraska's astronaut, Clayton C. Anderson.

Dr. Beam and her research team spent a January afternoon with Anderson at the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace



Former NASA astronaut Clayton C. Anderson explains the intricacies of spacesuits to UNMC's Beth Beam, PhD, and her team, at the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum near Ashland, Nebraska. Some design aspects are transferable to PPE.

Museum near Ashland, Nebraska, delving into the intricacies of spacewalk suits and helmets and getting his feedback on the prototype.

"Not bad. Cool," he said as he donned the helmet and drew a comparison to a 3M ammonia mask. They agreed: "The simpler in design PPE can be, the safer people will be," especially in high-stress situations.

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During her undergraduate years, Dr. Beam considered a career in architectural design and dabbled in computer-aided drafting. Today, those interests are valuable in the prototype lab, but her true passion lies in nursing. A registered nurse, she earned her BSN in 2000, followed by an MSN in 2004, and a PhD in 2014, all from UNMC.

Throughout the journey, Dr. Beam faced personal challenges, including the losses of her firstborn, Glen Allen, in 2010, and second child, Christian James, in 2014. Despite these tragedies, she found joy in motherhood with the arrival of Bradley in 2015, coinciding with the Ebola crisis and the completion of the dissertation for her PhD degree.

Backed by her husband and son and buoyed by the guidance of mentors and camaraderie of peers, Dr. Beam shares her experience and expertise as an associate professor of nursing and an education researcher with UNMC's Interprofessional Academy of Educators. Additionally, she contributes to various federally funded grants supporting Ebola and other high-consequence pathogens.

"There are so many places that nurses can make an impact," she said. As a nurse scientist, "I know a little about a lot of things," which comes in handy as a problem-solver. "Health-care protocols can be daunting," she said. "The reward is looking at the pain points and considering innovations that work."



**Rebekah
Gundry,
PhD**

Bullies, Fireflies & Rhino Skin

As Rebekah Gundry, PhD, reflects on her journey from middle school misfit to distinguished biomedical researcher, three character-defining elements come to light: bullies, fireflies and rhino skin.

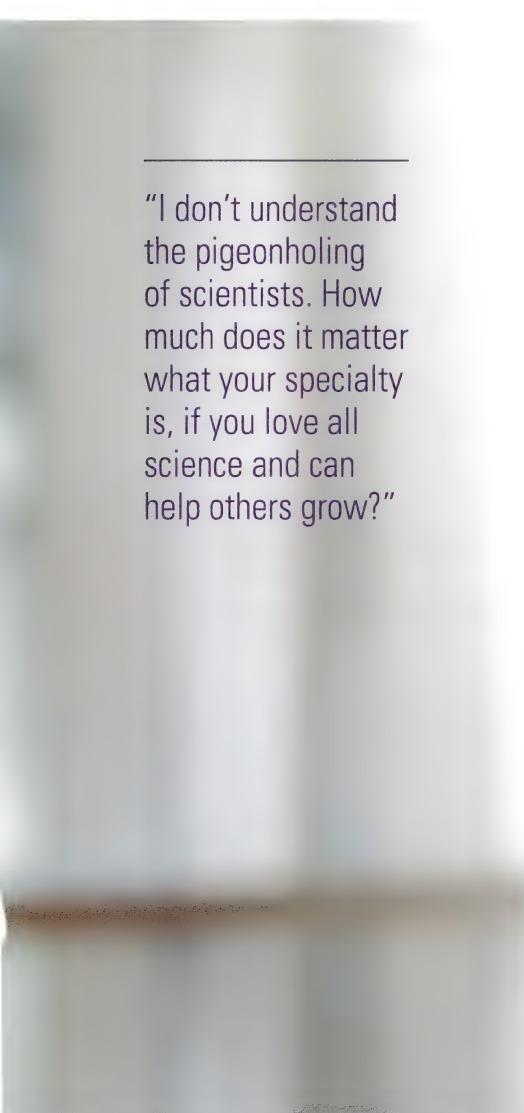
Growing up in rural Wisconsin, she didn't conform to the typical "cool kid" narrative. "I never hung out at the mall or friends' houses, or went to parties," she said. Her towering height and academic focus only served to set her further apart from her peers.

"I was weird. I never fit in," she said, revealing the harsh realities of middle school bullying that continued into high

school. Despite the torment, she emerged with resilience. "The experience gave me the rhino skin I needed for challenges later in life."

Raised in a conservative household with two older brothers, Dr. Gundry found her passion in science and nature and in studying how things worked. Her mother, knowing the misery at school, encouraged independent activities, such as 4-H and the Sigma Firefly Scientists Club, where a chemical company paid youths to catch fireflies and send them in for bioindustrial research.

"I spent 99 percent of my time outside," Dr. Gundry said. Fireflies were



"I don't understand the pigeonholing of scientists. How much does it matter what your specialty is, if you love all science and can help others grow?"

a fascination because of their light-producing ability. "Just thinking about sending them in for research and having an impact somehow, somewhere seemed extraordinary."

Her passion for STEM deepened in high school, especially after a perfume-making lab. "We started with these terrible-smelling chemicals called ethers. I thought that was the coolest thing ever."

Engaging in Science Olympiads, tackling puzzles and word problems, and bonding over episodes of "Unsolved Mysteries" with her mom were favorite activities. Today, "Forensic Files" is the must-watch TV series in the Gundry household.

In 1999, biochemistry and molecular biology became her focus at Marquette University in Milwaukee. The groundbreaking use of DNA evidence in the O.J. Simpson trial at the time inspired her to pursue a master's degree in forensic science at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Drawn to a career as a forensic scientist, she conducted her thesis research at the high-profile FBI Forensic Science Research Unit in Quantico, Virginia. However, she soon realized the downside of such a specialized path: It was overly confining for her aspirations. "I didn't want to be pigeonholed as a scientist." A PhD in pharmacology promised a broader path.

During post-doctoral studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Dr. Gundry's interests took an unexpected turn while working in a mass spectrometry lab. With applications spanning forensics, cardiac studies and cancer research, mass spectrometry offered the breadth of possibilities Dr. Gundry sought in a STEM career.

A postdoctoral fellowship at Johns Hopkins (2006 to 2010) provided an opportunity to utilize mass spectrometry in cardiovascular research, supported by funding from the National Institutes of Health. In 2009, Dr. Gundry received an NIH Pathway to Independence Award for her findings from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

She was 34, married and mom to 16-month-old Jack when she joined the faculty at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee in December 2010.

"This was never, ever on my radar," Dr. Gundry said of the assistant professorship that her mentors and colleagues encouraged her to accept. "Once I got there (academia), I realized I would have been miserable doing anything else."

Still, it was a challenging first year, living apart from her husband, building her syllabus and establishing a lab from

scratch. "I was a single mom for all intents and purposes" until Larry, still in Baltimore, was able to join her.

A second son, Cedric, arrived in 2012. Despite a difficult pregnancy, she persevered, continuing to publish papers and write grants.

Early in her career, she won accolades as a young investigator, graduate student educator and medical school instructor.

"Our family benefited from my husband transitioning to a stay-at-home-dad," she said.

Dr. Gundry's passion for exploring new scientific frontiers is reflected in her roles as Stokes-Shakelford professor and chair of the UNMC Department of Cellular and Integrative Physiology, and director of the UNMC Center for Heart and Vascular Research.

The Gundry Research Group at UNMC studies how molecules in the human heart change in disease. The lab also develops tools and reagents to promote stem cell technologies for improved drug testing and disease modeling.

"For my own lab's direction, I get most excited about finding something unknown and thinking about what technology we can invent to enable us to uncover even more," Dr. Gundry said.

Being named a UNMC 2021 Distinguished Scientist validated her lab's work and "gave me a sense of belonging." Being named UNeMed's Emerging Inventor of the Year in 2023 created another layer of gratification.

When pondering leadership opportunities in heart and vascular research and physiology in 2022 and 2023, Dr. Gundry came to a realization: A department chair's responsibility isn't primarily focused on their own scientific expertise. Instead, it entails leveraging the diversity of talent within the department and fostering growth.

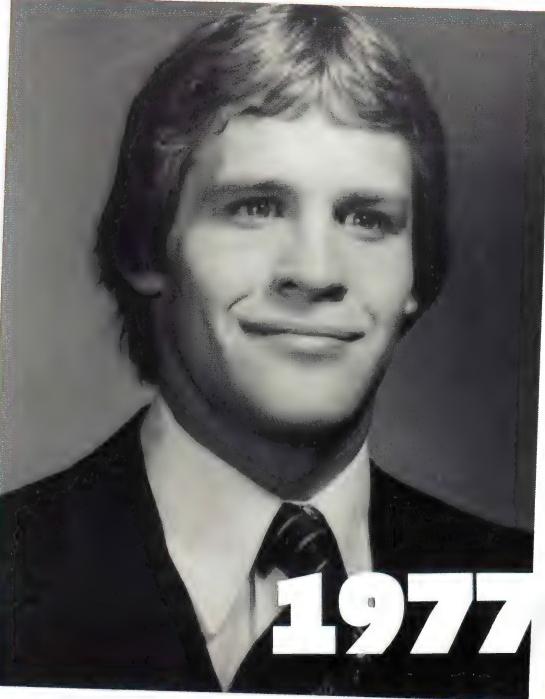
Success aside, she still needs her rhino skin. "The reality is that I fit everywhere, and I fit nowhere," she said. But she's good with that. "I'm my own limitation." 

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Faces and campus issues change, but the role of student senate president is constant: To promote the interests of UNMC students across all campuses and all colleges.

Gregory Sorensen, a pharmacy alum, served as UNMC's first student senate president in 1974. A few years later, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents welcomed the student body presidents from each NU campus as nonvoting, de facto members of the governing body. That regental role gave students a voice in influencing policy on a universitywide level.

Each student senate president leaves an indelible mark on the university. Here, 10 share highlights of their terms, advice for current student leaders, and an update on their proudest accomplishments post-graduation.



Peter Whitted, MD, JD

1977 Student Senate President

Career: Retired ophthalmologist

"A truly usable fitness facility was always on our wish list and, in fact, a donor came forward to fund one, but the gift was turned down for lack of ongoing funds to maintain it. Student loans were an issue but not to the extent they are today. My main task was to help define the then new role as student regent representing the medical center... If not the first one, I was one of the first. I thought it was important to be heard at the Board of Regents meetings and tried to stand up for the educational needs of UNMC students."

My advice for today's campus leaders is to take back the narrative from the corporatization and financialization of health care. 'Suits' are controlling all levels of care and it's not about access and quality but \$\$\$.

I'm most proud of the privilege of taking care of patients for 40 years ... Their trust is a physician's greatest gift. Professionally, I'm also proud of being involved in medical liability reform through COPIC, being on the boards of Metro Omaha Medical Society, the Nebraska Medical Association and the American Academy of Ophthalmology, as well as being chairman of the University of Nebraska Foundation."



1985

Susanne (Scott) Hiland, PharmD

1985 Student Senate President

Career: Senior director, Walmart Health and Wellness

"As student senate president, I focused on finding ways to improve campus life. We looked at student fees and how they could best be used, updated student break/commons areas to make them more welcoming, and scheduled activities to help lessen the pressures of demanding academic loads.

My most memorable work stemmed from serving as student regent; 1985 was an especially meaningful year for a pharmacy student to be in that seat. I remember a closed meeting of the Board of Regents when, due to budget constraints of the Nebraska Legislature, a vote was taken to close the College of

Pharmacy. As a pharmacy student, it was devastating and personal, but served as a call to action. We spent the summer in a statewide signature campaign to Save the College of Pharmacy and prevailed.

I'd tell student leaders: Approach your role as a servant leader, be an advocate and don't try to do everything yourself.

Since graduating, I am proud of my time on active duty as a pharmacist in the Navy. Now in my 35th year with Walmart, I have had the opportunity to develop our clinical pharmacist program and start our accredited PGY1 Community Pharmacy Residency program."



2000

Allison Cushman-Vokoun, MD, PhD

2000 Student Senate President

Career: Director, division of diagnostic molecular pathology and human genetics, and medical director, molecular diagnostics and personalized medicine laboratory, Nebraska Medicine/UNMC; fellowship director, ACGME Molecular Genetic Pathology Fellowship Program; professor, UNMC Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology

"I served as the UNMC Faculty Senate President in 2019-2020 — 20 years after being student senate president and just as the pandemic was starting.

When I was a student leader, there was no Michael F. Sorrell Center for Health Sciences Education. Wittson Hall served as the backdrop for many students and the mailbox system lacked privacy (academic test results used to be released in paper format into mailboxes; little was done via email/internet as it was slow). We worked with Chancellor (Harold) Maurer, MD, to improve this system.

We have wonderful training programs at UNMC, and our students and trainees are some of the smartest, hardest-working people I have met. The more we grow our educational programs here, the more human resources we have from which we can recruit.

I am proud of helping to build a robust clinical cancer genetics/genomics laboratory at Nebraska Medicine/UNMC to assist oncologists in treating advanced cancer patients with the newest precision therapeutics. I also am proud of the fellowship program I started, and have continued to direct, in molecular genetic pathology. Since its start in 2015, we have hired six of the MGP fellows as faculty in the department of pathology, microbiology and immunology."

1987

Jay Bansal, MD

1987 Student Senate President

Career: Medical director, LaserVue Eye Center, Santa Rosa, California

"Serving as a student regent was a privilege and a highlight of my academic career. I learned about patience and playing the long game, while planting seeds and developing designs for new initiatives, and also listening to the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. One of the issues was whether the nursing college should have a PhD program. There was no clear right or wrong — just different opinions that needed to be heard and skillfully harmonized.

My advice to today's campus leaders is to listen more than you talk. Recognize that change comes about slowly. Don't give up.

I'm proud of having developed a successful and thriving practice, taking care of my patients, working with a great and longstanding professional team and contributing to our community.

After the devastating Sonoma County fires in October 2017, my family lost our home and I nearly lost my practice and new surgery center. Since then, my family has thrived and helped rebuild our community."

Read his first-hand account in CRST at crsttoday.com/articles/2018-mar/burning-insight



2005

Nick Behrendt, MD

2005 Student Senate President

Career: Physician, Colorado Fetal Care Center, specializing in maternal-fetal medicine and fetal surgery through the University of Colorado/Children's Hospital Colorado/Anschutz Medical Campus in Denver

"During my year as president of student senate, we tried to get a pool added to the Student Center...but that never happened! We worked with a local business to raise enough money to help fund a medical mission trip to Central America. Personally, I wrote a fight song for UNMC and sung it at a Board of Regents meeting.

My advice is to interact with leaders from across campus. Being a student leader is an incredible opportunity to see how a major academic medical center works. Your investment in this process helps build the future of UNMC, and gives you experiences that will serve you well during your career.

I am proud to be part of a team (Colorado Fetal Care Center) that built a unit within Children's Hospital Colorado that specializes in multidisciplinary care from prenatal to postnatal life. Because of this, I enjoy getting to work with patients and providers from my home state of Nebraska!"



2013

Jeremy Hosein, MD

2013 Student Senate President

Career: Neurosurgeon, Lincoln, Nebraska

"We started a student grant program to fund projects for philanthropy and community building. We also brought the Readership

Program to UNMC, which provides free newspapers so student professionals could stay informed of current events.

I'd encourage students to keep a daily journal for reflections and gratitude.

During the Trump administration, I am proud to have served as a White House Fellow for one year, working in the Office of Legislative Affairs and as an advisor to HHS Secretary Alex Azar.

In the future, I hope to visit all the Presidential libraries. Four down so far!"



2014

Krupa Savalia, MD, PhD

2014 Student Senate President

Career: Assistant professor, department of neurological surgery, University of California-Davis



"I am most proud of initiating and laying the groundwork for what became the "Grievance Resolution Procedure." I had the privilege of serving on the Graduate Student Association while completing my doctoral studies at UNMC. Through this leadership position, I learned more about the potential for conflict/struggle when a power dynamic exists between a mentee and their mentor. Many hours of research, interviewing students/faculty, and writing went into developing a thoughtful policy which was judicious, and importantly, confidential. The goal was to create a safe place to further enhance a culture that aligns with the values of our great institution.

I also am proud of hosting the UNMC Student Senate's first Leadership Summit, featuring former NBC News anchorwoman and UNMC College of Medicine alum, Nancy Snyderman, MD ... and creating the UNMC Graduate Student Oath with vice president Dr. Alicia Diener (in a car ride to Lincoln for a Board of Regents meeting).

My advice to students is to lead by example and collaborate across disciplines. Our role in health care is multidisciplinary, and I hope I created a safe space for our diverse student body to collaborate on innovative projects and to develop creative solutions.

Since graduating, I'm proud of surviving and, in some sense, thriving in my two-year critical care fellowship training, which occurred during some of the darkest days of the pandemic.

I am the proud mother of two wonderful children. I have an independent, creative and highly spirited 5-year-old, Natalia Raina, and an adventurous, strong-armed and sweet 1-year-old, Justinian Rohan. We were brave enough to travel from California to Italy with them, where we enjoyed exploring the beautiful north and eating lots of gelato."



2018

Sarah Hotovy, MD

2018 Student Senate President

Career: Practicing family medicine with obstetrics, Mayo Clinic Health System, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

"One of our main goals in student senate was to increase student interconnection. We worked hard to leverage virtual meeting technology (before Zoom became a way of life in 2020!) to include representatives from the campuses outside of Omaha. We also created an all-campus events email to increase student engagement.

My advice to students: Don't be afraid to speak up! At times I worried I didn't know enough about certain subject matter to add to the conversation. A mentor reminded me that I had a unique and important viewpoint to share as an expert on the student experience; if I did not contribute my insights, an important perspective would be left unheard.

I'm proud of being a four-year Pisacano Leadership Foundation Scholar through the American Board of Family Medicine. I'm inspired and encouraged by my fellow scholars' commitment to innovation and excellence in our profession.

My husband and I welcomed a son, Micah, in September 2023. He is adored by all, but especially his big brother, Jack (age 2.5)."



2017

Carissa Lueck, DNP

2017 Student Senate President

Career: Active-duty pediatric nurse practitioner and pediatric clinic element leader, RAF (Royal Air Force) in Lakenheath, United Kingdom

"I was proud of our efforts to encourage students to reach out to legislators regarding university funding and other items of impact. I also was proud of the conversations and education around diversity and inclusion.

My advice to campus leaders is to talk to fellow students and senate members. Listen to their ideas — everyone has different and unique experiences that we can learn from.

Since graduating, I'm proud of receiving a secondary certification in primary care mental health.

Being able to travel around Europe while being stationed here is a big bucket list item!"



Catch up with Brenden Connealy, MD, 2006; Curtis McKnight, MD, 2008; Bradley Bohn, MD, 2009; and Thomas Schroeder, MD, 2020 at unmc.edu/news/connect

2021

Taylor Kratochvil, MD

2021 Student Senate President

Career: Pediatric residency, second year, Boston Children's Hospital & Boston Medical Center

"While president, the senate launched the opt-out mental health counseling pilot program, which has since expanded to all new UNMC students, and initiated the UNMC Green Space Series (a recurring outdoor event series sparked by COVID event restrictions).

The most important role as a student leader is in building a culture of community. Despite UNMC's growth over the past decade, the campus has maintained a "small town" feel in its supportive culture. As a student, you have a valuable perspective on how best to reinforce this culture for your fellow students.

Since graduating, I have been able to carry-forward many initiatives I was involved in at UNMC, including the study of an opt-out mental health counseling program for pediatric residents (mirroring UNMC's) and the expanded study of a clinical tool (developed while at UNMC) to promote healthy screen media use in kids.

I have accepted a chief resident position at Boston Children's Hospital and plan to pursue further training (likely in pediatric gastroenterology). I also look forward to returning home to UNMC and Children's Nebraska in the not-so-distant future." 



THE MACHINES OF MEDICAL IMAGERY



Using this interactive 3D program, students and health care professionals can practice donning and doffing procedures for personal protective equipment.



Learn more about UNMC's iEXCEL program at unmc.edu/iexcel and view a portfolio of their work.

**Story by Karen Burbach
Illustrations by iEXCEL at UNMC**

As a child, Bill Glass spent hours paging through Peterson Field Guides, the classic series known for its intricate wildlife illustrations. Glass remembers being captivated by the detail in drawings of such striking North American birds as the bald eagle and red-tailed hawk. "It was like telling a story without words," he said.

These illustrative books would lead Glass, who "hated" math and English and "didn't care" about history, to a career in medical illustration.

"All I liked was art and science."

Growing up in Malaysia, Jer Weann Ang, too, was fascinated by the amount of information gleaned dissecting microscopy images and diagrams in biology books. "I wanted to replicate that and share the beauty of biology and life with others."

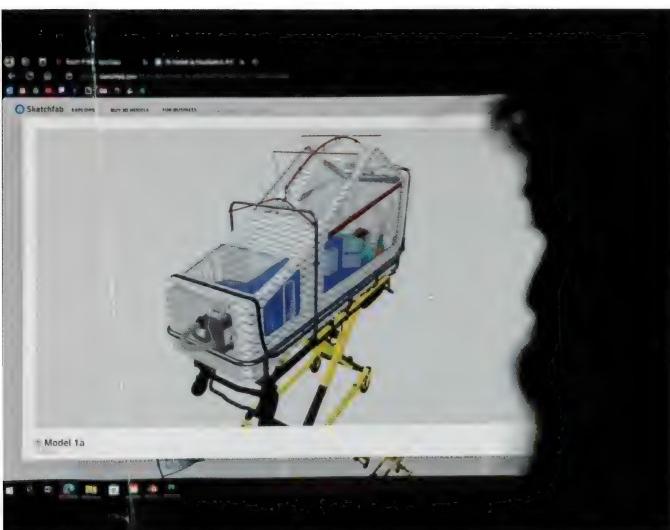
Plans for a genetics and molecular biology graduate degree changed when an undergraduate art adviser in the U.S. suggested another way to combine her love of science and art: medical illustration.

Today, Glass and Ang transform complex biological and medical concepts into more easily understood 3D modules to benefit UNMC health profession students, faculty and staff — a stark contrast to hand-drawn anatomy illustrations studied by past generations.

Their talents contribute to iEXCEL's visualization team — a cadre of designers, artists and animators who create custom, anatomically correct, 3D-content for health education classes. Beyond medical illustration, the team's resume boasts a range of skills and experiences that stretch from Hollywood to Netflix to the gaming industry — skills they use to bring science to life for UNMC students.

At UNMC — inside the Dr. Edwin G. & Dorothy Balbach Davis Global Center — the team is grounded by a clear mission and meaningful work. "We're focused on making assets as accurate and informative as possible," Glass said. "Seeing people use our content and having that 'Aha!' moment is rewarding."

They're also on the front lines



in charting a new course for health science education.

"iEXCEL set out to create the most accurate medical imagery possible because we believe 3D and virtual and augmented reality can help students learn about complex anatomy and physiology in an engaging way," said Pam Boyers, PhD, associate vice chancellor of clinical simulation and iEXCEL. "We have combined gaming, modeling, simulation and visualization to create volumetric 3D imagery that brings learning to life."

Students can — at their own pace and in their own time — manipulate and engage with organs and systems to better understand how they function. Real, but anonymized, patient data helps clinicians with diagnostics and pre-surgical planning.

"Ultimately, our vision is to distribute content across distance in real-time to respond to emergencies and provide tele-mentoring and tele-proctoring to save lives," Dr. Boyers said.

Success, she said, will depend, in part, on talented artists and technologists.

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Medical illustration has long played an invaluable role in translating science to improve lives. From illustrations on papyrus to Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical figures to Andreas Vesalius' anatomy book, "De Corpus Fabrica Humani," to today's 3D modules, illustrations transform complex information into visual images that improve learning and understanding.

An artist works on a 3D model of a portable isolation unit used to safely transport patients with a highly infectious disease.

German artist Max Brödel is considered the father of modern medical illustration. Hired at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1894, he became the inaugural director of the first medical illustration program in the country in 1911. Many of his students became founding members of the Association of Medical Illustrators in 1945.

Glass wasn't aware of such history while reading Peterson Field Guides. A love of oil painting and watercolors led him to a fine arts degree at Auburn University, and, from there, an understanding of the starving artist stereotype. After illustrating a pamphlet for a cousin's home health company, he enrolled in the Medical College of Georgia, where he graduated with a Master of Science in medical illustration in 1989.

"I have been in bliss ever since," he said.

Turns out medical illustration also was a perfect fit for Ang, who earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in genetics (with a minor in studio art).

She joined UNMC after graduating with a Master of Science in biomedical visualization from the University of Illinois at Chicago, in 2021.

"It's a cool career because it's so niche, and you can combine art and science," Ang said.

•••

On this day, the lights are dimmed within UNMC's Content Incubation Lab, and the room is quiet, but for the clicking of computer keyboards.



Visual content brings science to life for UNMC medical student Uyen Tran.

Turning ideas into visual products

Planning phase

The planning and creative process begins once a project is proposed and reviewed.

Script and storyboard phase

A storyboard is created to develop visual elements of a project, which help communicate the project's look and feel.

Development phase

Modeling, animation and programming take place. Subject matter experts provide feedback and guidance to ensure scientific accuracy.

Prototype phase

A preliminary version is tested and refined.

Completion

Once goals are met, the project is deployed to the requested teaching platform.

Upon closer look you see Glass, Ang and the rest of the creative team, busily at work — illuminated by the glow of their computer monitors. On one screen, you see an artist's topographic evolution of a pelvic muscle. Nearby, data helps create a 3D skull. Steps away, a 3D perfusion machine springs to life onscreen with

animation and coding that allows learners to turn knobs and “operate” the machine. Steps away, a vibrant blue eyeball is rendered as realistic as the eyes of its creators.

•••

Merging art, science and technology is a painstaking process, and the iEXCEL team routinely works with subject

matter experts to build accurate medical content, which includes building a near complete virtual 3D body — one deidentified module at a time.

With each proposed project, the team evaluates its purpose, audience and impact. Can it be used across multiple disciplines? Across multiple platforms? Does it grow iEXCEL's anatomical

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KENT SIEVERS AND iEXCEL AT UNMC

catalogue? Can outcomes be measured? Does the bandwidth exist to create it?

Soon, the room's ceiling-to-floor marker board begins to resemble an anatomical textbook with sketches, notes and storyboards that help subject matter experts and artists speak the same language.

From there, and at each stage of development, different team members add salient details that advance or refine the project. The collective work enables learners to ultimately see virtual 3D anatomical modules in exquisite detail. And, with each project, iEXCEL's digital library grows, providing learners with new ways to study the heart, blood cells, eye, pelvis and more.

The team also creates digital twins of medical equipment and technologies to help students learn in safe environments, develop their confidence, practice competencies and be more prepared to enter the real world of health care.

"Every day is different," Glass said, noting the team's collaborations extend to other disciplines and industries as well as the military. "There's not a recipe for doing VR applications or other experiential things so we do a lot of problem-solving, trial and error and learning of new software."

Once a module is completed, the high-definition images are used throughout UNMC classrooms, and on computers, digital headsets, 3D CADWalls,



MEET THE TEAM



JER WEANN ANG
medical illustrator
Hometown: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Degree: University of Wisconsin-Madison, genetics, art; University of Illinois at Chicago, Master of Science, biomedical visualization
Joined UNMC: 2021
Fun fact: iEXCEL won first place in the 2023 BioCommunications Association's Biolimages competition, which showcases the finest still, graphics and motion media work in the life sciences and medicine. Ang and the team's animation on NK Cell Toxicity garnered the Premier Award in the Multimedia, Interactive Learning and Website division.



BRIAN CURTIS
3D animation visualization specialist
Hometown: Lincoln, Nebraska
Degree: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, sociology
Joined UNMC: 2017
Fun facts: Worked in Los Angeles at visual effects studios including Sony Pictures Imageworks, Digital Domain and Pixomondo; animator on Real Steel, The Amazing Spider-Man, TRON: Legacy, X-Men: First Class, After Earth, 2012, and Star Trek Into Darkness.
His motivation: "In LA, everything is pigeonholed and specialized; here, with a smaller team, there are a lot of tasks to learn, which helps me grow as an artist."



PAUL DYE
manager, educational technology & design
Hometown: Omaha
Degree: University of Nebraska at Omaha, fine arts; University of Nebraska at Kearney, master's degree in educational technology
Joined UNMC: 2017
His forte: "I co-lead the visualization team with Bill (Glass) and do graphic design work, video editing, sound design, motion graphics, programming ... every role here I've touched, so I understand what everyone does."



WESLEY FISHER
3D generalist
Hometown: Omaha
Degree: Metropolitan Community College, computer programming
Joined UNMC: 2019
Fun fact: Uses CT and MRI scans to create medically accurate 3D model drafts, which his coworkers then build upon.
His motivation: "I can do something special here and contribute to a team that helps improve the way we teach."



Content creators at iEXCEL build a library of custom-made, anatomical 3D assets including this skull.

iWalls and UNMC's first-of-its-kind, four-story SONY wall.

Already, the team has:

- Created 3D animations that enable first-year students to study blood clotting.
- Created a unique interactive learning module to educate learners on benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, a leading cause of dizziness in adults.
- Developed a virtual crash cart that allows learners to explore before an emergency.
- Created anatomical models — an eye, inner ear, brain and skull — that can be dissected, labeled and manipulated in 3D space.

More than 50% of the team's content runs on multiple platforms, Glass said.

...

Visual resources are a game-changer for UNMC's Uyen Tran, a second-year medical student. "I'm a huge visual learner, and the iEXCEL team takes difficult concepts and makes amazing visualizations that really help students learn."

A narrated coagulation video is among the standouts, she said, describing how it breaks down the complex sub-cellular process. "The visualization team, they're perfectionists ... and this showcases the factors coming in sequentially, one by one, and how they cleave to form a clot."

For students, that detail and imagery create deeper understandings — especially with difficult-to-grasp concepts, she said. "When you read

words off a textbook, you're memorizing information because you can't really visualize it, but with visualization you conceptualize it and understand why and how things happen."

Knowing such material was available influenced the Hastings, Nebraska, native and University of Nebraska at Omaha graduate on where to pursue her interest in surgery. "I came thinking that would be really helpful for my education in medical school and beyond."

She still remembers the day she and her classmates first saw an iEXCEL e-module. "Students were like, 'Whoa! We made this? How do we even make this?' It was cool to see students be amazed at what our institution can do." 



BILL GLASS

artistic director

Hometown: Huntsville, Alabama

Degree: Auburn University, fine arts and art history; Medical College of Georgia, Master of Science, medical illustration

Joined UNMC: 2016

Fun fact: His entry into the digital world was a Macintosh II computer in 1988, and a professor saying, 'you don't know if you'll always have access to a computer.'

His jam: "There are times I get so engrossed or involved, the next thing I know it's three or four hours later. Work is never a burden."



ANTHONY LANZA

3D generalist I

Hometown: Manteca, California; moved to Omaha at age 9

Degree: Full Sail University, Orlando, Florida, computer animation

Joined UNMC: 2019

Fun fact: Came to UNMC from the gaming industry as a 3D modeling/texturing software expert.

His motivation: "I love the projects we get here; there's always something new to learn and I'm helping my community by being part of UNMC and iEXCEL."



DHEERAJ VARANDANI

visualization tech lead specialist

Hometown: India: Jaipur, Rajasthan

Degree: Savannah College of Art and Design, visual effects and technical direction; University of Nebraska at Omaha, computer science

Joined UNMC: June 2019

Fun facts: Previously worked at an animation studio in Atlanta, Georgia, on the Netflix special *Elf on the Shelf*. As the team's lighting and look development specialist, Varandani wraps up the process, making each model as realistic as possible.



JEREMIAH WILT

computer programming specialist

Hometown: Sacramento, California; moved to Warrenton, Oregon

Degree: University of Nebraska at Omaha, IT innovation with a focus in 3D game creation

Joined UNMC: 2018

Fun fact: Interned at iEXCEL while attending UNO

How he thinks: "When you think of making a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich, you go to the cabinet and get bread and to the frig for jelly. (As a computer programmer) I think about, what room were you in, were you sitting or standing, how tall are you, how long is your reach..."

NUTRITION AS MEDICINE

The Building Blocks of Health

by Karen Burbach





THE FOOD

Diet, healthy or otherwise, can impact an individual's health, making nutrition a larger part of today's medical education and care.

Susan Evans, MD, knows healthy eating is a prescription for better health.

Now, the 2005 UNMC College of Medicine graduate is making sure future physicians both understand — and can create their own — healthy eating habits.

"Food and nutrition are one of the building blocks for health," said Dr. Evans, assistant professor in UNMC's Department of Family Medicine. "We're not — as a population — eating a healthy diet, and as medical students and physicians we're historically not taught as much nutrition."

"Yet, dietary factors are the biggest risk factor for morbidity and illness so it's important to ask our patients about nutrition. If we know how to eat and prepare a healthy diet, we're more likely, and more confident, in asking and counseling our patients on nutrition."

To do that, Dr. Evans fulfilled a decade-long dream to partner with Metropolitan Community College's Institute for Culinary Arts and create an elective, four-hour culinary medicine course for UNMC's fourth-year medical students.

"Students love the cooking class," which is supported by The Monarch Fund to nurture healthier lifestyle choices, she said.

Med students travel 4.5 miles to MCC to learn both the foundation of a healthy Mediterranean diet and fundamental knife skills, before whipping up a classic citrus vinaigrette or a salmon, spinach and quinoa salad.

The culinary medicine class is the icing on a revamped nutrition curriculum that mirrors national trends to strengthen nutrition education for medical students. Through the efforts of an interprofessional team including basic science, nutrition and medical faculty, nutrition content has been integrated across the first three years of medical training.

Too often, nutritional messages are confusing, Dr. Evans said. To keep it simple, she advocates for diet quality over diet type, which means eating real foods — fruits or vegetables, fresh or frozen; healthy proteins; whole grains; nuts; seeds; olive oils and other healthy fats. She recommends avoiding processed foods, keeping a food journal to avoid mindless eating, and adding high-fiber foods to one's diet.

Nutrition is truly a team effort, Dr. Evans said, and acknowledges that healthy lifestyle choices are impacted by cost barriers, cultural beliefs and one's access to transportation and insurance. "The more we know, as physicians, the more we can work with dietitians and reinforce the role of nutrition."

The goal is simple, she said: "I'd like to see more of us living a healthy lifestyle and having conversations with our patients because they think we are a reliable source of knowledge on nutrition." 🍃

More about The Monarch Fund

Ben Aresty launched The Monarch Fund in 2013. This is his story.

"In 2012, after many years of visiting UNMC for treatment with my dad, David Aresty, I developed an awareness of how health care workers were (or were not) taking care of their own health. There was a gap in knowledge and applied practice. I witnessed health care professionals working long hours, getting by with lots of caffeine, and eating most meals on the go. I, being a chef, could relate. While I prepared amazing food for others, I was barely taking care of my own health and nutrition needs."

My dad passed away in 2013 from a sudden heart attack, preceded by years of health challenges. His passing catapulted me into taking action to learn about my own relationship with food and develop a deeper understanding of nutrition, and set me on a mission to help others with their relationships with food.

The Monarch Fund was born with the goal of supporting health care professionals, and a dream to see healthy practices and lifestyle choices become more prevalent in the medical industry."

Pairing healthy cooking with nutritional info and meal prep tips is a recipe for success at UNMC, where wellness and well-being are top of mind.



What we eat matters.

Yet, too often, fast and ultra-processed foods are America's go-to option.

Now, Steven Wengel, MD, assistant vice chancellor for wellness at UNMC, is partnering with others to promote healthy eating through healthy cooking.

"How much we move and eat matter dramatically," Dr. Wengel said. "This project is intended to provide a healthy cooking lesson that is practical for busy people and pleasing to the palate."

In 2020, Dr. Wengel helped launch "Keep Calm and Cook On," a series of virtual presentations for UNMC faculty, staff and students that includes a cooking demonstration, nutritional information and a question-and-answer session.

Supported by The Monarch Fund, the project is a joint effort of UNMC Human Resources, UNMC's wellness program and medical nutrition staff, and the Metropolitan Community College Institute for the Culinary Arts' Open Kitchen Workshops. In addition, UNMC's food services partner, Sodexo, features limited menu items at its med center cafes.



Dr. Wengel credits MCC's Brian O'Malley and Sara Rogers for their culinary collaboration, UNMC's Mariah Jackson, assistant professor of medical nutrition, for providing nutritional highlights during each demonstration, and HR's Giovanni Jones for her creativity and logistical help.

Participants learn how to prepare healthy (and easy!) recipes that don't require hours in the kitchen or long lists of costly ingredients. Past presentations have focused on preparing Minnesota wild rice soup, lemon chicken orzo and turkey and black bean chili.

"More and more research is being done on the negative effects of 'ultra-processed food' on our health," Dr. Wengel said. "One antidote for that is cooking at home using healthy ingredients."

A geriatric psychiatrist, Dr. Wengel said growing evidence suggests lifestyle factors may impact and help prevent such diseases as Alzheimer's. "More and more, we're seeing that lifestyle factors — like how much you move and what you eat — matter," he said.

In addition, reports indicate that some psychiatric conditions — obsessive compulsive disorder and major depression — are associated with derangements of the microbiome, he said. "We don't know if it's cause or effect," Dr. Wengel said, "...but in some preliminary studies, the microbiomes of people with depression or OCD seem to be different. Can we influence that by diet? We don't know, but maybe."

One thing we do know, he said: "There's no downside to eating healthy." 🌶

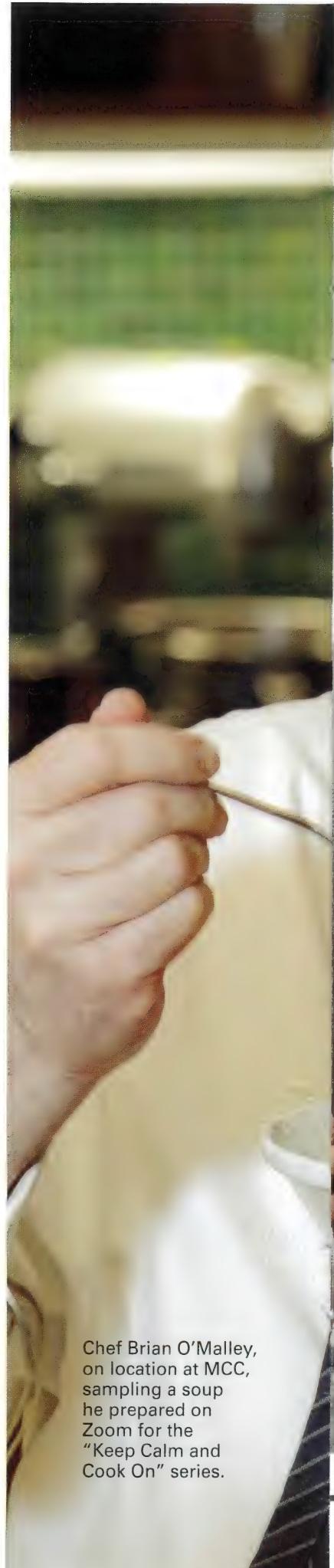


PHOTO BY KURT STEVENS

Chef Brian O'Malley, on location at MCC, sampling a soup he prepared on Zoom for the "Keep Calm and Cook On" series.



Students explore food, nutrition

UNMC's Culinary Interest Group is more than a band of foodies.

Second-year medical student Aaron Allison said the group allows him to "share the joy I get from food with other people and explore cuisines."

Kaitlyn Slepicka, also a second-year med student, participates because of her passion for cooking and healthy eating.

And, Misty Pocwierz-Gaines — a trained chef now pursuing a PhD in UNMC's Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area graduate program — enjoys sharing her excitement and knowledge of food with others.

"Most of us weren't raised in households where we ate healthy food," Pocwierz-Gaines said, and students often struggle both to find time to cook between studies and classes and experiment in the kitchen on a budget.

Pocwierz-Gaines — who trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, before working in restaurants and then making a career change — said the group provides students with a casual outlet, as well as recipes with common ingredients that make the process easier and more cost effective.

The organization, which started in 2022, is open to all UNMC students; about 225 are currently on the mailing list. Overall, the group works to enhance student wellness, improve nutritional literacy, broaden cultural awareness and engage in philanthropic events involving food insecurity.

Recently, the group celebrated Lunar New Year recipes with the med center's Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Their past activities have included informational sessions — from 'what is the role of a dietitian on the health care team' to 'how to eat healthy on a budget' — and an annual chili cook-off fundraiser, the latest of which raised \$300 and 10 pounds of food for the Food Bank of the Heartland.

"There's no skill barrier to joining the club," Allison said. "We simply help people explore food."

THE RECIPES

For a healthier, more cost-effective option, skip takeout and prepare a dish from scratch at home. Here's a trio of enticing options.



Grandma's Chicken Soup Recipe

Courtesy of Stephen Rennard, MD

1 5- to 6-pound stewing hen or baking chicken
1 package chicken wings
3 large onions
1 large sweet potato
3 parsnips
2 turnips
11 to 12 large carrots
5 to 6 celery stems
1 bunch parsley
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Clean the chicken, put it in a large pot and cover it with cold water. Bring the water to boil.
2. Add the chicken wings, onions, sweet potato, parsnips, turnips and carrots. Boil about 90 minutes. Remove fat from the surface as it accumulates.
3. Add the parsley and celery. Cook the mixture about 45 minutes longer.
4. Remove the chicken. The chicken is not used further for the soup. (The meat makes excellent Chicken Parmesan.)
5. Put the vegetables in a food processor until they are chopped fine or pass through a strainer. (Both were performed in the study.)
6. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Note: This soup freezes well.

Simmering appeal of UNMC's chicken soup study

The story of UNMC's chicken soup study resurfaces each year during cold and flu season.

Stephen Rennard, MD, professor of pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine, and his co-investigator, wife Barbara Rennard, were featured in *Newsweek Polska* this past fall for their scientific research showing that mom was, of course, right. Chicken soup really can help you feel better when you are sick.

Dr. Rennard is a world-renowned chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) researcher, but far more world renowned for his longago study on chicken soup.

The story has been in the news again and again, and most recently, in Polish.

Retired UNMC media relations expert Vicky Cerino, who shepherded the chicken soup story for two decades, once estimated the study's publicity being worth "perhaps several million" dollars to the med center.

Dr. Rennard went into the lab, using his wife's grandmother's magical chicken soup recipe, to test a hypothesis. In 2000, he published the results in a peer-reviewed journal (*Chest*). The study, which tested the potential anti-inflammatory effect of chicken soup, has been cited by media nonstop ever since. Two decades later, it still appears in newspapers, magazines, websites, broadcasts and podcasts, all around the world.

— Kalani Simpson



Stephen Rennard, MD, and his wife, Barbara, proved that chicken soup is good for body and soul.



For more healthy recipes, visit
unmc.edu/news/connect

Lemon Caper Pasta

Courtesy of UNMC's
Culinary Interest Group

First in pan

1/8 cup olive oil (enough to cover bottom of pan)

1/2 to 1 head garlic, thinly sliced

Second in pan

1 tablespoon basil or oregano

1-2 tablespoons capers
(Briney taste)

Splash caper brine

Zest of 1 lemon

Pinch red pepper flake

Third in pan

2 beaten eggs

3-4 ounces Parmesan cheese

Extra pasta water, if sauce needs thinning

Juice of 1/2-1 lemon

1 box preferred pasta (linguine or elbow are good choices)

Salted water

1. Cook garlic on low heat so oil is lightly boiling (cooking too hotly will breakdown important volatile compounds)

2. Add spices, zest and capers (wind in pan) to the olive oil and garlic. Cook at a barely higher temperature for 5 minutes. The spices should not bubble but should be fragrant. If pasta needs more time, lower the temperature of the spices and garlic. Add pasta to salted boiling water, cook to al dente or slightly less than al dente; it will cook more in the final steps.

3. Maintain heat, add cooked pasta directly from water to the pan of oil and spices (it is OK if some pasta water is added). Mix until spices are thoroughly distributed. Add eggs, Parmesan and lemon juice; continually stir until cheese is melted and has formed a sauce. Add pasta water if sauce is too thick or to help melt cheese. The sauce should coat pasta, but not cause clumping.



Lemon Chicken Orzo

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Community College Institute for the Culinary Arts

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

9 ounces carrots, brunoise

9 ounces celery, brunoise

9 ounces onion, brunoise

1 clove garlic, pasted

1 lemon, zested & juiced

3 quart chicken stock

Fat pinch, dried basil

Fat pinch, dried oregano

1 each, bay leaf

1 pound chicken meat, cubed

5 ounces orzo, cooked and cooled

1/4 ounce fresh parsley, minced

3 leaves fresh basil, chiffonade

2 stems fresh oregano, minced

Kosher salt and pepper to taste

1. In a large stock pot over medium high heat, add vegetable oil and heat until shimmering.

2. Into the shimmering oil, add the carrot, onions and celery, season and stir until fragrant — about three minutes.

3. Into the fragrant vegetables, add the pasted garlic and lemon zest and heat until just fragrant — about 90 seconds.

4. Into the sofrito, add a small splash of the chicken stock; stir vigorously to lift any sucs from the pan.

5. Add the remaining chicken stock and dried herbs; heat until simmering, reduce heat and maintain a simmer until vegetables are soft and broth is flavorful — about 45 minutes.

6. Five minutes before service, increase heat until soup just comes to a steady boil.

7. Into the boiling broth, add the finely cubed chicken and cooked orzo; broth should cool to a simmer, reduce heat to maintain simmer and stir frequently to break up chicken, simmer until chicken is cooked through — about seven minutes.

8. Finish with lemon juice and fresh herbs in the bowl. Yields 1 gallon.

A leader in fighting disease outbreaks



Regional Treatment Centers

1. Massachusetts General Hospital (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)
2. NYC Health + Hospitals / Bellevue (NJ, NY, PR, VI)
3. Johns Hopkins Hospital & MedStar Washington Hospital Center / Children's National (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)
4. Emory University / Children's Healthcare of Atlanta & University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)
5. University of Minnesota Medical Center & Corewell Health System (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)
6. University of Texas Medical Branch (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)
7. Nebraska Medicine / University of Nebraska Medical Center (IA, KS, MO, NE)
8. Denver Health & Hospital Authority (CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY)
9. Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (AZ, CA, HI, NV, AS, MP, FM, GU, MH, PW)
10. Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center & Children's Hospital (AK, ID, OR, WA)



by John Keenan

It's been a decade since the World Health Organization declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa a public health emergency.

That emergency, and Nebraska's response to it, laid the groundwork for the National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC), now approaching its 10th anniversary.

In early 2015, the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention asked the three United States organizations that successfully cared for patients with Ebola — UNMC and Nebraska Medicine, Emory University and NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue — to form the National Ebola Training Education Center.

"The focus was on education and training," said Shelly Schwedhelm, associate director for clinical operations and emergency management at UNMC's Global Center for Health Security. "We wanted people to be knowledgeable, informed and able to create safe practices for their work environment if cases kept coming."

Since then, NETEC's role has evolved, including its name — NETEC now stands for the National Emerging Special Pathogen Training and Education Center. The name change took place in 2019, taking lessons from the Ebola response and applying them broadly to prepare for other emerging special pathogens.

"The scope and mission of the center also expanded," said John Lowe, PhD, director of UNMC's Global Center for Health Security and NETEC co-PI with co-PIs at Emory University and New York Health and Hospitals Corporation. "NETEC developed a national research network for rapid clinical research, activities and tools to assess special pathogen readiness across the nation and convened international partners to advance global readiness."

This paid dividends when Nebraska and Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (RESPTs) across the nation were thrust to the forefront in the nation's response to COVID-19.

UNMC and NETEC collaborators leveraged NETEC training and programming to rapidly respond to COVID-19. At UNMC,

Dr. Lowe and Joshua Santarpia, PhD, did the first testing that showed this was an airborne pathogen; the team did research validation on the N95 disinfection strategy with ultraviolet radiation; the medical center did the first remdesivir trial led by Andre Kalil, MD; and NETEC partner sites played a significant role in assessing COVID-19 therapies in large, rapid clinical trials.

NETEC now serves as the hub for 13 Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers. And beyond its educational mission, it also has a response role in the case of an emerging special pathogen.

"We are able to connect the 13 centers, from the 10 HHS regions across the nation, and bring everyone together to discuss what outbreaks are happening, what gaps exist nationally and what should be prioritized to maximize readiness," said Lauren Sauer, associate director of research for UNMC's Global Center for

"We essentially create the infrastructure each time there's a new outbreak: What are the medical countermeasures? What are the supportive therapies and treatments that we could put in place to help mitigate and reduce severity of illness in the United States?"

Lauren Sauer, associate director of research for UNMC's Global Center for Health Security and NETEC director of the Special Pathogen Research Network

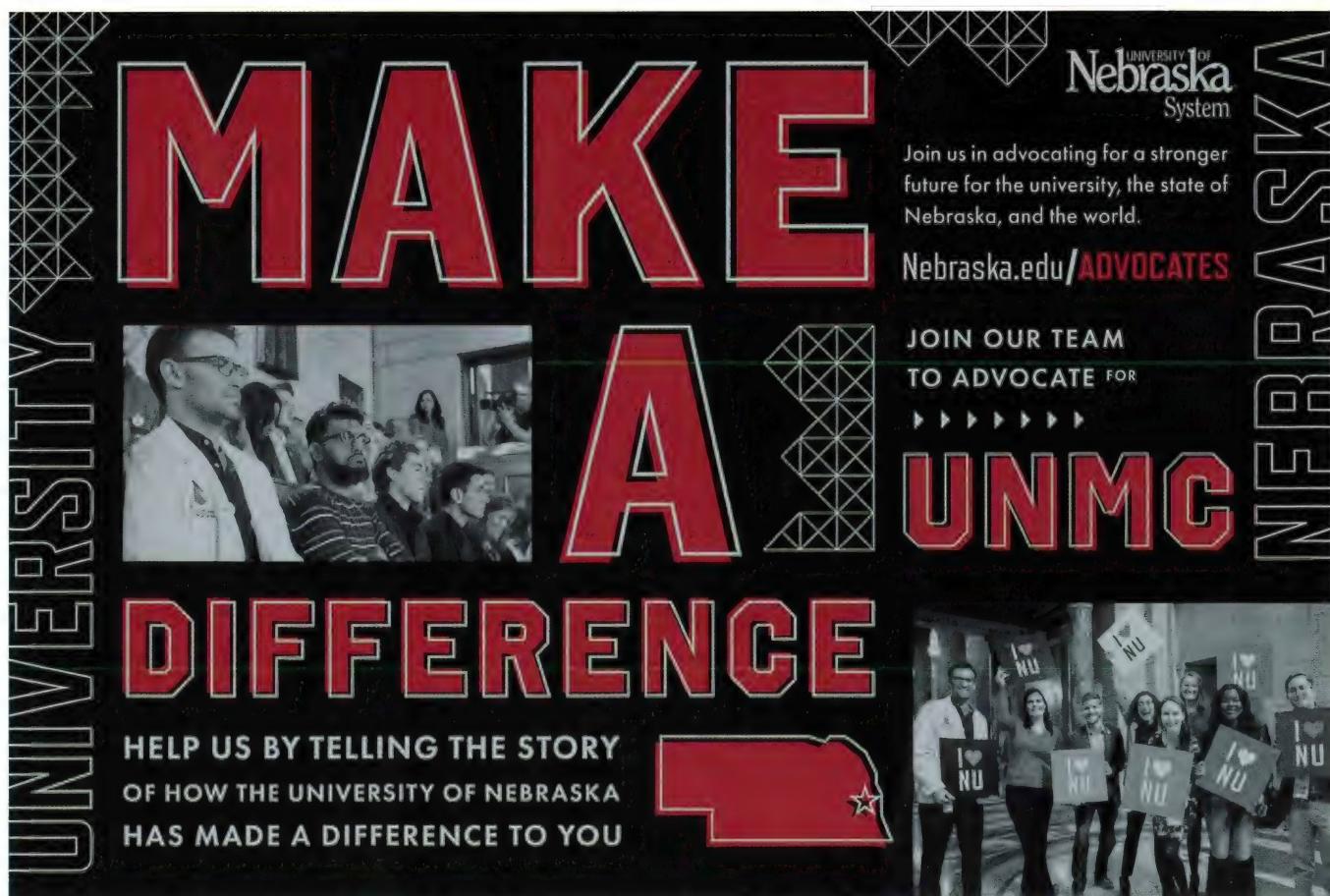
Health Security and NETEC director of the Special Pathogen Research Network. "We then push out the knowledge and training for these centers to provide safe practices.

The network also has started to reach out internationally, led by UNMC College of Public Health's Jocelyn Herstein, PhD, who serves as NETEC director of international partnerships and programs.

"We have relationships with more than 22 different countries," Dr. Herstein said.

Schwendhelm is now executive leader for the National Special Pathogen System (NSPS), which she describes as a tiered national system of care that includes the RESPTCs, treatment centers and assessment centers. NETEC serves as the coordinating body for the NSPS, the engine to support the new tiered structure.

"The consortium has become a trusted entity for the federal government," she said. 



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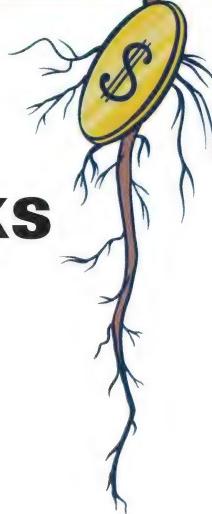


ILLUSTRATION BY ANANDA VALENTE

**Gift provides seed funding
for UNMC's Center for Drug
Design and Innovation**

Center works to leverage, jump-start novel ideas

by Kristen A. Schmitt



When Marsha and Neal Morien of Arizona decided to make an investment in UNMC's Center for Drug Design and Innovation, they knew it could benefit not only Nebraska, but possibly the world. That's because the newly opened center has a critical goal: to help shift the paradigm of drug discovery and development.

"We live in an environment where there are many opportunities to give, but instead of making a small impact, we wanted to put our funds toward a larger opportunity that can make a difference," Marsha said. The Moriens' gift commitment is being matched by funds available through an endowed gift made by College of Pharmacy alumnus Joe Williams, PharmD, and his wife, Millie.

The current system of drug discovery and development is ripe for innovation. Large pharmaceutical companies employ some of the world's best minds in drug

development, but to maintain the complex infrastructure needed to bring a billion-dollar-plus drug through FDA approval, these companies tend to focus on blockbuster drugs. Within that paradigm, it may make little financial sense to develop drugs such as antibiotics, which are designed to be taken for a short period of time, or drugs that are otherwise unlikely to generate significant sales, such as so-called “orphan” drugs. These drugs, however, may be critically needed by hundreds of thousands of people or, in the case of antibiotics, millions.

To shift this model, pharmaceutical companies increasingly work with academic partners to leverage their expertise. These partnerships result in more effective drugs reaching patients and provide a boon for academic institutions.

Corey Hopkins, PhD, professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the UNMC College of Pharmacy and the center's inaugural director, said the Moriens' gift couldn't have come at a better time.

“It shows that the vision we had for the center is supported,” he said. “We have people behind it and this gift will benefit UNMC, the College of Pharmacy and Nebraska.”

Seeding the way to industry interest

An important first step in drug discovery and development is seed funding for novel research, which the Moriens' gift will help provide. Seed funding allows researchers to complete their study or conduct another series of experiments to move their projects along — either closer to translation or to obtaining a patent.

“The hardest part with grant funding is you first have to have results,” Dr. Hopkins said. “A gift like this one from Marsha and Neal can act as the start of a new project rather than [researchers having to] rely on federal funding. It can help jump-start new and promising ideas.

“As a scientist, you’re always thinking of something new, but you’re risk averse to start,” Dr. Hopkins said. “These funds allow us to get started, see where we can go and hopefully that leads to more funding.”

“This center will be a critical resource for the design of new therapeutics that provide new hope for Nebraskans facing challenging medical diagnoses.”

Keith Olsen, PharmD, Joseph D. Williams Endowed Dean of UNMC’s College of Pharmacy

Along with allowing more opportunity to obtain federal grants, seed funding also can help the center — and its researchers — gain industry interest, which can lead to potential partnerships and funding for additional research.

“Increased innovation, more drug discovery and more patents,” Dr. Hopkins said, “helps you gain [the attention of] individual companies that then might be interested in investing in the university, which could lead to startups and other activities that would keep people in Nebraska.”

High returns for Nebraska

The Moriens believe their gift has the potential for “high returns,” which is why they wanted to pay it forward at UNMC and the University of Nebraska.

Marsha Morien, who had a long career within UNMC administrative leadership before retiring in 2018, said other areas like infectious diseases and neurosciences may also benefit from philanthropic support of the center as it brings together basic science and clinical investigators and investors who are after mutually important research with positive outcomes.

Neal Morien, a retired senior executive at Mutual of Omaha, noted that drug development and drug manufacturing in Nebraska is an underserved area. Through their philanthropic support of the center, he and Marsha hope their investment will help create new

economic opportunities and more jobs.

That aim will be assisted by a planned educational seminar series, which Dr. Hopkins said will showcase the center’s research and facilities and introduce students to companies and organizations for future employment. Dr. Hopkins plans to use funding from the Moriens’ gift to invite industry and thought leaders as speakers and involve students in topic selection with the hope of attracting additional faculty and scientists to the center.

The series, along with other activities and seminars hosted or offered by the center, also will help break down academic silos within the University of Nebraska framework, Dr. Hopkins said, as faculty and staff begin to see the shared benefits of the center.

Keith Olsen, PharmD, who serves as the Joseph D. Williams Endowed Dean of UNMC’s College of Pharmacy, said the center not only will lay the foundation for seminal contributions from UNMC’s research faculty, as well as the wider Nebraska system, but it also will put the NU system on par with other Big Ten institutions.

“Most importantly,” Dr. Olsen said, “this center will be a critical resource for the design of new therapeutics that provide new hope for Nebraskans facing challenging medical diagnoses.”

Only in Nebraska

Marsha and Neal Morien’s support of UNMC’s Center for Drug Design and Innovation is part of *Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University’s Future*. The campaign aims to meet the pressing needs of our communities by supporting the hard work of researchers who will save lives and solve Nebraska’s — and the world’s — biggest challenges. Through this historic campaign, UNMC and its clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine, seek to engage 25,000 unique benefactors to raise \$1 billion to build the future Nebraska needs now. Learn more at OnlyinNebraska.org/unmc



The UNMC Alumni Association and its councils select award recipients each year based on the individuals' outstanding accomplishments. Whether it's service to their profession, community or the university, those selected have made a difference and set an example for others to follow.

"We applaud the work of our award recipients who have blazed a trail for future health care professionals," said Catherine Mello, UNMC alumni director. "We are so proud of their many accomplishments, and it is an honor to recognize them through the annual alumni awards program."

- @UNMC_AA
- @UNMCalum
- @unmcalumni
- @UNMCAA

GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM

Peter Iwen, MS '82, PhD '01 D(ABMM), F(AAM)
Distinguished Alumnus Award

Jodi Kreiling, PhD '05
Mid-Career Achievement Award

Lisa Bilek, PhD '13
Early Career Achievement Award

Athena Ramos, PhD, MBA, MS, CPM
Honorary Alumnus Award

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Toni Ganzel, MD '78, MBA
Distinguished Alumnus Award

ILLUSTRATION BY ANANDA WALDEN

Dennis Strauss, MD '68

Dedication to Student Excellence Award

Geoffrey Talmon, MD '03, MED
Early Career Achievement Award**Anthony Yonkers, MD**
Honorary Alumnus Award**COLLEGE OF NURSING****Barbara Sittner PhD, BSN '90, MSN '94**
Distinguished Alumnus Award**Marion Richmond, BSN '71**
Dorothy Patach Spirit of Service Award**Majeda El-Banna, PhD '04, RN, CNE ANEF**
Nursing Excellence Award**COLLEGE OF PHARMACY****Matthew T. Nye, PharmD '83****COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH****Wael ElRayes, MBBCh, PhD '17, MS '20, FACHE**
Distinguished Alumnus Award**Leah Swanson, MPH '17, MA, RRT**
Early Career Achievement Award**Kate Grafel, MPH '18**
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Award**COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY****Kenneth R. Tusha, DDS '82**
Distinguished Service Award**Paula L. Harre, DDS '82, Orthodontics '95, MS '96**
Alumni Achievement Award**Amy C. Killeen, DDS '06, Periodontics '10, MS '11**
Outstanding Educator Award**Rowen K. Zetterman, MD '69**
Honorary Life MembershipSee the honorees' bios at unmc.edu/alumni/getinvolved/awards**NEWS****Join UNMC's Online Community**

As a member of UNMC's online community, Alumni Connections, you can be a pivotal resource for current students as they learn the ropes of their professions. Whether you answer questions on the discussion board, share articles in your profession's group or meet with students one-on-one, the opportunities to help are endless.



Help empower the next generation of health science professionals at connections.unmcalumni.org
or scan the QR code.

**UPCOMING EVENTS****SEPTEMBER****27-28****Alumni Reunion Weekend in Omaha**

For graduates of the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy with class years ending in "4" and "9".

NEWS**The Impact of UNMC's Innovation Funds**

Gifts to the UNMC Innovation Funds are a vital source of support for student engagement opportunities, the people and programs of the Alumni Association, upgrades to technology, white coat professionalism ceremonies, and more. Each college has its own Innovation Fund that directly impacts its students with customized programs and activities to enhance their success.



Scan the QR code to see the impact of the Innovation Funds or to provide a gift of support.

OCTOBER**4-5****College of Dentistry****125th Anniversary Celebration****& 2024 Alumni Reunion in Lincoln**

Alumni class honor years are those ending in "4" or "9," however, all alumni are invited to attend and help mark the 125th anniversary.

Events subject to change. Find the latest information at unmc.edu/alumni/events



We'd love to hear from you!

Send us your news through this online form: go.unmc.edu/unmcaaupdate

Don't see your submission here? It may not have reached us in time for our print deadline. Check out our Special Edition of Class Notes at go.unmc.edu/classnotes23 or watch for our next digital edition this fall.



↑ Denai Gordon M'20

Omaha, Neb., is a family physician at Nebraska Medicine and an assistant professor in the UNMC Department of Family Medicine.

Shelby Liesemeyer M'20

Kearney, Neb., joined Kearney County Health Services in Minden, Nebraska, in October 2023.

Anna Swartzlander N'21

Lincoln, Neb., became a clinical instructor for the UNMC College of Nursing-Lincoln Division in 2023.

Shalea Cotton N'22

Omaha, Neb., was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in 2023. She serves as a clinical assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing and is a nurse practitioner at North Omaha Area Health, a UNMC community partner, where she focuses on women's health.

Matt Fuglestad, Surgery '22

Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC College of Medicine in the fall of 2023, as an assistant professor in the division of colon and rectal surgery, within the department of surgery. He also practices as a colorectal surgeon with Nebraska Medicine.

Sydney Armstrong-Grint D'23

Grand Island, Neb., recently opened Radiant Modern Dentistry in Grand Island. She is a graduate of the Wehrle Implant Immersion Course and earned a Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services certification.

Lace Sindt N'23 *Griswold, Iowa*, joined Cass Health in November 2023, where she provides medical dermatology care. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa in 2019, after working as an LPN and RN for 10 years.



Collier expands her leadership.

2010s

Marc Ellwein PA'10 *Sioux Falls, S.D.*, retired in September 2023, after 39 years.



Heidi Keeler GS'10 *Papillion, Neb.*, recently was selected to participate in the Developing Excellence in Academic Leaders Program (NU DEAL), a University of Nebraska program to develop the next generation of higher education leaders. She is director of the UNMC College of Nursing Continuing Interprofessional Development and Innovation, and assistant vice chancellor in the Office of Community Engagement.

Dr. Dickey returned to UNMC from Florida.

Curt Krobot PT'10 *La Vista, Neb.*, opened his own clinic, Kinetic Physical Therapy, in the fall of 2023.



Perkins is in her 10th year as a nurse practitioner.

Terry Larsen, Surgery '10 *Huron, S.D.*, joined the Huron Regional Medical Center in November 2023. He recently moved to Huron from Lyndonville, Vermont, where he had provided rural general surgery care for over 13 years. He is originally from Sioux City, Iowa, and has family in the area.

Sara Myers GS'11 *Ashland, Neb.*, was named the associate vice chancellor for research and creative activity at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in August 2023.



Dr. Shaffer, ready to grow in role as director.

Chris Shaffer MS'11, GS'21 *Omaha, Neb.*, has transitioned from his role as assistant dean for student affairs in the UNMC College of Pharmacy to focus on his other role as director of the Child Health Research Institute Pediatric Pharmacology Program. ➔

Jaime Seeman M'12, Obstetrics and Gynecology '16 *Elkhorn, Neb.*, has joined the Omaha Supernovas pro volleyball team as its head team physician. In addition to her medical career, she is a published author and known internationally for her health and fitness brand, Doctor Fit and Fabulous.

◀ **Julia Collier PT'13** *Corona, Calif.*, was promoted to area director of operations for EmpowerMe Wellness in October 2022. She and her husband, Clinton, welcomed twins, Hudson and Harper, in January 2023.

◀ **Brittney Dickey PH'13, GS'19** *Omaha, Neb.*, became an assistant professor in the UNMC Department of Epidemiology in the College of Public Health in fall 2023. She previously was in Tampa, Florida, completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Moffitt Cancer Center.

Adrian Brown N'14, '23 *Gering, Neb.*, joined the Regional West Physicians Clinic-Women's Center in December 2023, as a nurse practitioner.

Haley Hays N'14, '21 *Mitchell, Neb.*, was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in 2023. She is a clinical assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing.

◀ **Elizabeth Perkins N'14** *Omaha, Neb.*, is a graduate of the UNMC Accelerated Nursing Program and a nine-year veteran of bedside nursing on the Special Care Unit at Nebraska Medicine. During Nurses Week 2023, she received a hospital-wide Spirit of Nursing Award.

Ryan Santin M'14 *Palmer, Neb.*, joined Merrick Medical Center in 2023, as a rural psychiatrist. He practices in the Rural Health Clinic in Central City. Previously, he was an inpatient psychiatrist at Bryan Medical Center's West Campus in Lincoln, the Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Sioux Falls, and served as a clinical assistant professor for the University of South Dakota Medical School.

Marshall Bahr M'15 *Salem, Ohio*, launched his own practice, Lead the Way to Recovery, which offers a new approach to addiction and substance abuse. He applies his experience as an Army Ranger medic and extensive clinical background to treat those in need of help.

Estepani Jacobo N'15 *Lincoln, Neb.*, joined the UNMC College of Nursing in 2023, as a nurse practitioner fellow.

Angela Johnson N'15 *Laurel, Neb.*, was named assistant dean at the UNMC College of Nursing Northern Division in Norfolk in summer 2023, after having served as interim assistant dean for six months. She joined the Northern Division as an instructor in 2015 and moved into an assistant professor position after completing her EdD in 2021.

Sias Scherger M'15 *Elkhorn, Neb.*, joined the UNMC College of Medicine in 2023, as an assistant professor in the division of infectious diseases in the department of internal medicine. He also sees patients through Nebraska Medicine.



↑ **Matthew Dale GS'16, M'18** *Omaha, Neb.*, joined UNMC College of Medicine in 2023 as an assistant professor in the division of general surgery in the department of surgery. He also joined Nebraska Medicine as a general surgeon.

Jacee Jedlicki N'17 *McCook, Neb.*, practices at Community Hospital in McCook, and works with patients in a variety of roles from medical/surgical and post-partum work to the emergency room.

Melissa Langenberg N'17, '21 *Kearney, Neb.*, was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in 2023. She is a clinical assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing.

Ashton Neelans N'17 *Omaha, Neb.*, became a clinical assistant professor for the UNMC College of Nursing in 2023.

In Memoriam

Victoria Dickinson BS'46 Canton, S.D. Feb. 15, 2023	Robert Burton D'56, MS'60 Lincoln, Neb. Oct. 27, 2023	James Bare BS'60, M'62 Papillion, Neb. Feb. 2, 2023	Larry Penney M'67 <i>Coeur d'Alene, Idaho</i> April 13, 2023	James Powell MS Periodontics '71, '95 <i>Augusta, Ga.</i> Oct. 31, 2023	Jean Rose N'75 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> Sept. 16, 2023
John Filkins M'46 <i>Council Bluffs, Iowa</i> Oct. 26, 2023	Samuel Kais M'56 <i>San Jose, Calif.</i> Jan. 16, 2023	William Earley D'60 <i>Parker, Colo.</i> March 25, 2023	Lawrence Bausch M'68 <i>Lincoln, Neb.</i> Aug. 10, 2023	Lynn Toman N'71 <i>Newport News, Va.</i> March 19, 2023	Paul Hennegan D'76 <i>Colorado Springs, Colo.</i> May 29, 2023
Stanley Sterling D'47 <i>Madison, Wisc.</i> Jan. 13, 2023	Donald Finks D'57 <i>Centennial, Colo.</i> April 29, 2023	Thomas Hinrichs M'61 <i>Surprise, Ariz.</i> June 29, 2023	Robert Harry M'68 <i>Denver, Colo.</i> March 10, 2023	Joan Norris N'72, '74 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> June 21, 2023	Steven Kramer D'76 <i>Fort Collins, Colo.</i> June 9, 2023
Pauline Langsley M'53 <i>Littleton, Colo.</i> Oct. 21, 2023	Janet Rath N'57 <i>Green Valley, Ariz.</i> Aug. 1, 2023	James Peck M'61 <i>Scottsbluff, Neb.</i> May 23, 2023	David Lamey MS'68, Orthodontics '95 <i>La Quinta, Calif.</i> Feb. 26, 2023	Dennis Hall BS'73 <i>Columbus, Neb.</i> March 25, 2023	Ingrid Stites N'76 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> Nov. 5, 2023
Donald Ostendorf BS'53 <i>Ravenna, Neb.</i> May 7, 2023	John Schreiber D'57 <i>Colorado Springs, Colo.</i> June 4, 2023	Hugo Uhland M'61 <i>Dewey, Ariz.</i> Feb. 26, 2023	James Nelson D'68 <i>Medford, Ore.</i> Feb. 19, 2023	William Lyons III M'73, Family Medicine '76 <i>Fountain Hills, Ariz.</i> Aug. 12, 2023	Gary Glissman N'77 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> Feb. 22, 2023
Gayle Barrett BS'54 <i>Gettysburg, Penn.</i> Aug. 10, 2023	Keith Treptow M'57 <i>Tucson, Ariz.</i> Dec. 1, 2023	Glen Lau M'62 <i>Lincoln, Neb.</i> Aug. 25, 2023	Sally Smith M'68 <i>Chesterfield, Mo.</i> May 11, 2023	Barbara Morton N'73 <i>Lincoln, Neb.</i> Aug. 16, 2023	Lawrence Kaczmarek M'77 <i>Norman, Okla.</i> July 30, 2023
Edgar Cleaver M'54 <i>Tulsa, Okla.</i> March 26, 2023	Robert Volz M'57 <i>Tucson, Ariz.</i> Dec. 17, 2023	Robert Rasmussen M'62 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> April 4, 2023	Marcia Yochum N'68 <i>Whiteewater, Wisc.</i> April 8, 2023	Robert Mraule M'77, Oral Surgery '79, '96 <i>Salinas, Calif.</i> April 28, 2023	
Donn Crilly M'54 <i>Superior, Neb.</i> June 16, 2023	Grace Felthousen N'58 <i>Plattsmouth, Neb.</i> July 10, 2023	Leon Handke M'63 <i>Norfolk, Neb.</i> Sept. 1, 2023	James Chapin M'69, '72 <i>Miramar Beach, Fla.</i> Nov. 6, 2023	Fran Houghton-Gillespie M'74 <i>Pensacola, Fla.</i> May 7, 2023	David Walline D'77 <i>Waterloo, Neb.</i> July 15, 2023
James Dinsmore M'54 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> March 22, 2023	Donald Hammes M'58 <i>Valley, Neb.</i> March 26, 2023	Donald Bell M'64 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> Jan. 9, 2023	Gerald Heussmann P'69 <i>Wahoo, Neb.</i> Nov. 30, 2023	Joseph Mares BS'74 <i>Friend, Neb.</i> June 25, 2023	Bill Yates M'77, Family Medicine '80 <i>Tulsa, Okla.</i> Jan. 19, 2023
Lorraine Edmunds N'54, '61 <i>Sioux City, Iowa</i> May 4, 2023	Margaret Saathoff MT'58 <i>Meridian, Idaho</i> May 20, 2023	Wilma Finley N'65 <i>Papillion, Neb.</i> March 9, 2023	Joan Mares MT'69 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> July 12, 2023	Michael Grutsch PA'75 <i>Lincoln, Neb.</i> May 14, 2023	Barry Tietgen PA'78 <i>Pierce, Neb.</i> Sept. 12, 2023
James Pettygrove BS'54 <i>Topeka, Kansas</i> March 11, 2023	Richard Bush D'59 <i>Kearney, Neb.</i> June 20, 2023	Floyd Petzoldt D'65 <i>Prescott, Ariz.</i> July 24, 2023	Rita Christianson N'71 <i>Fremont, Neb.</i> Aug. 24, 2023	Patrick Woster BS'78, GS'87 <i>Charleston, S.C.</i> July 15, 2023	
Ray Johansen D'55 <i>Sacramento, Calif.</i> April 24, 2023	Ronald Peterson M'59 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> June 12, 2023	Charles Harold D'66 <i>Gilbert, Ariz.</i> Aug. 24, 2023	John Hilton M'71 <i>San Diego, Calif.</i> March 6, 2023	Carol Harris N'75, '79 <i>Omaha, Neb.</i> Dec. 25, 2023	Douglas Zikmund BS'78 <i>Columbus, Neb.</i> Feb. 3, 2023
William Lippstreu D'55 <i>Sun City West, Ariz.</i> May 23, 2023	Patrick Wells MS'59, GS'61 <i>Houston, Texas</i> May 11, 2023	Eli Chesen M'67, '69 <i>Lincoln, Neb.</i> Oct. 25, 2023	Mary Hodges N'71 <i>Davenport, Calif.</i> March 23, 2023	Leo Heywood M'75, Otolaryngology '79 <i>Coldingspring, Texas</i> Nov. 12, 2023	Thomas Cotton M'79, Internal Medicine '82 <i>Bellevue, Neb.</i> Sept. 16, 2023
			Billy Laun D'71 <i>Table Rock, Neb.</i> Jan. 3, 2023	Karla Manzel N'75 <i>Plattsmouth, Neb.</i> April 18, 2023	

If you know of someone who should be listed here, please email alumni@unmc.edu or call 402.559.4385.

Betty Cook N'80
Omaha, Neb.
April 12, 2023

Timothy Pallen N'80
Maryville, Mo.
April 8, 2023

Michael Rourke P'80
Omaha, Neb.
Nov. 10, 2023

**Sandra Weinman
N'81, '90**
Bennington, Neb.
Aug. 10, 2023

**Elizabeth Westover
N'81, '84**
Lincoln, Neb.
July 24, 2023

James Crabb D'82
Tilden, Neb.
Nov. 6, 2023

Marc Davies P'83
Wallingford, Penn.
July 29, 2023

**Judith Stern M'83,
Internal Medicine '86**
Fort Myers, Fla.
May 1, 2023

Fredrick Krause D'84
Kearney, Neb.
Dec. 7, 2023

**Jearlyn Schumacher
N'84, '88**
Lincoln, Neb.
May 14, 2023

**Yolanda Watson
N'84, '89, '03**
Bellevue, Neb.
Aug. 22, 2023

**Jayne Brunke-Keen
MT'85**
Kearney, Neb.
Oct. 10, 2023

Linda Miles N'85
Lincoln, Neb.
Feb. 11, 2023

Brenda Mumm N'85
Geneva, Neb.
Feb. 21, 2023

Joyce Affleck N'87
Omaha, Neb.
March 14, 2023

**Michael Grier P'89,
M'94**
Anderson, S.C.
Oct. 25, 2023

Lisa Brandl P'91
Omaha, Neb.
Feb. 14, 2023

**Mendy Anderson
N'92**
Caldwell, Idaho
Dec. 8, 2023

Jean Jirka N'92
Omaha, Neb.
Jan. 22, 2023

Louise Bauer N'93
Kearney, Neb.
Aug. 6, 2023

Rebecca Herink M'93
Fremont, Neb.
Feb. 10, 2023

Jeffrey Johnson D'93
Colorado Springs, Colo.
Nov. 29, 2023

David Kelly GS'94
Omaha, Neb.
Sept. 18, 2023

Karen Kroeker N'94
Brady, Neb.
Sept. 18, 2023

Stella Martinez N'94
Scottsbluff, Neb.
Feb. 20, 2023

**Rebecca Brown
N'95**
Lincoln, Neb.
Dec. 4, 2023

Ashli Hoos MN'95
Grand Island, Neb.
Oct. 27, 2023

**Cheryl Christensen
P'96**
Lincoln, Neb.
Sept. 11, 2023

**Kimberly Jacobson
MT'96**
Lincoln, Neb.
Feb. 10, 2023

Nancy Hanson N'98
Omaha, Neb.
Sept. 27, 2023

**Cade Hunzeker
D'00, Pediatric
Dentistry '02, '07**
Elkhorn, Neb.
Sept. 5, 2023

Betty Elder N'01
Topeka, Kansas
Feb. 7, 2023

**Matthew Latacha
M'02**
Omaha, Neb.
Sept. 10, 2023

**Matthew Mendlick
M'03**
Omaha, Neb.
Oct. 15, 2023

Staci Rosche M'05
Omaha, Neb.
Sept. 19, 2023

Terry Clark PA'07
Iowa City, Iowa
March 11, 2023

**Kimberly Kunkee
N'13**
Modale, Iowa
April 15, 2023

Sarah Saldi N'13
Omaha, Neb.
May 4, 2023

Richard Ready PA'21
Petawawa, Ontario
Jan. 29, 2023

Loany Ryder MLS'17 Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions as Medical Laboratory Science program education coordinator in 2023. She previously worked in large clinical microbiology laboratories and outpatient point of care labs in Indiana and Nebraska. →



Ryder, new education coordinator.

Erica Ketchem D'18 Kansas City, Mo., and her husband, Tyler, welcomed a daughter, Clara Bernadine Ketchem, on June 6, 2023. →



Dr. Ketchem's bundle of joy.

Zach Parshall M'18, Surgery '19 Papillion, Neb., joined the UNMC College of Medicine in fall 2023 as an assistant professor in the division of general surgery within the department of surgery. He also joined Nebraska Medicine as a general surgeon. →



Dr. Parshall, now a teaching and practicing surgeon.

Marisa Rosen GS'18 Omaha, Neb., was named the Great Plains Community Collaborator of the Year in October 2023. She was recognized by the Great Plains IDeA-CTR Network, designed to improve the health of all Americans and help overcome issues endemic to this part of the country. She is involved in Diabetes On Track, a rural community demonstration project led by UNMC and funded by the Diabetes Care Foundation of Nebraska. She is an assistant professor in the UNMC College of Public Health Department of Health Promotion. →



Dr. Rosen, a collaborator on diabetes care, education.

Samuel Woodruff PH'18 Omaha, Neb., became director of information technology at Encounter Telehealth in fall 2023.

Allie Burt M'19 Omaha, Neb., joined the UNMC Department of Psychiatry in 2023 and sees patients with Nebraska Medicine.

Sean Flor M'19 Aurora, Neb., joined Memorial Community Health, Inc., in January 2024. Prior to medical school, he had an extensive and distinguished career in the U.S. Air Force, most recently serving as an instructor weapon systems officer in the 37th Bomb Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. There, he flew the B-1B bomber from 2007-2011, including three combat tours to Southwest Asia. After completing his residency at the Lincoln Family Medicine Residency Program, he now practices at Jefferson Community Health & Life in Fairbury, Nebraska.

Amber Golden N'19 *Omaha, Neb.*, was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in 2023. She is a clinical assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing.

Alyson Hanish N'19 *Omaha, Neb.*, was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in 2023. She is an assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing. ➔

Katelyn Hunke N'19 *Omaha, Neb.*, became a clinical instructor for the UNMC College of Nursing in 2023.

Morgan Johnson M'19 *Platte City, Mo.*, joined Liberty Hospital in 2023 as a hospitalist, following her residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

Elizabeth Rasmussen N'19 *Kearney, Neb.*, became a clinical instructor for the UNMC College of Nursing Kearney Division in 2023.

Varda Singhal, Internal Medicine '19 *Kansas City, Mo.*, joined the Liberty Hospital Heart Center in 2023 as an interventional cardiologist and co-leads development of a women's heart program.

2000s

Beth Beam N'00, '04, GS'14 *Omaha, Neb.*, was appointed to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicines' Standing Committee on Personal Protective Equipment for Workplace Safety and Health in 2023. In January 2024, she became director of global health for the UNMC College of Nursing. She also serves as an associate professor in the college and director of the HEROES (Healthcare and Emergency Responder Organization Education through Simulation) Program. She is an education researcher for the UNMC Interprofessional Academy of Educators and vice chair for the UNMC Institutional Review Board, where she represents the college.



Dr. Hanish,
a rising star
in nursing.



Dr. Shonka,
a standout
in research.



Dr. McConkey,
new author
and political
hopeful.



Dr. Mollard,
one to watch
in maternal
health.

Nancy Meier N'00, '01, '11, '17 *Gering, Neb.*, retired from the UNMC College of Nursing West Nebraska Division in January 2024, after 25 years.

Ann Anderson Berry, Pediatrics '01, GS '14 *Omaha, Neb.*, was named a new member of the American Pediatric Society in November 2023. APS members are child health leaders of extraordinary achievement who shape the future of academic pediatrics. She is the executive director of the Child Health Research Institute.

Kari Simonsen M'01 *Elkhorn, Neb.*, was named a new member of the American Pediatric Society in November 2023. APS members are child health leaders of extraordinary achievement who shape the future of academic pediatrics. She is chair of the UNMC Department of Pediatrics.

◀ **Nicole Shonka M'02, Internal Medicine & Hematology '09** *Omaha, Neb.*, received a New Investigator Award from UNMC in November 2023. She is an associate professor in the division of oncology and hematology within the department of internal medicine in the UNMC College of Medicine. Her research focuses on high-grade gliomas.

◀ **Joshua McConkey M'03** *Apex, N.C.*, was awarded the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award at Chadron State College, where he graduated from the Rural Health Opportunity Program in 1999. He has published his first book, "Be the Weight Behind the Spear," a call to action for Americans to engage their communities and develop future leaders and heroes. He has announced his campaign for U.S. Congress for North Carolina's 13th Congressional District.

Brandon Grimm PH'05, GS'13 *Bellevue, Neb.*, recently was selected to participate in the Developing Excellence in Academic Leaders Program (NU DEAL), a University of Nebraska program to develop the next generation of higher education leaders. He is vice dean in the UNMC College of Public Health.

◀ **Libby Mollard N'05, GS'16** *Lincoln, Neb.*, received a New Investigator Award from UNMC in November 2023. She is an assistant professor in the College of Nursing Lincoln Division and focuses on maternal health disparities.

Melissa Soester PA'05 *Louisville, Neb.*, received the Pat and Susan McClaughry Physician Assistant Excellence in Teaching Award from the PA class of 2023. She is the research director for the UNMC Physician Assistant Program and a valuable member of the clinical education team.

Craig Nemechek M'06 *North Sioux City, S.D.*, received the 2023 Dr. George G. Spelman Annual Service Award from the MercyOne Siouxland Foundation. The award recognizes community members whose generosity exemplifies the values of MercyOne Siouxland Medical Center. He is board certified in general surgery and has practiced at The Center for Neurosciences, Orthopedics & Spine since 2011. He is medical director of MercyOne Siouxland Medical Center's Trauma Center and is a hospital board member. He and his wife Angie have two boys.

Jordan Colwell N'09 *Scottsbluff, Neb.*, joined the board of the OpenSky Policy Institute in December 2023. He serves as the chief nursing officer at Box Butte General Hospital in Alliance.

Kyle Johnson M'09 *Omaha, Neb.*, was named procedural services chief at Bellevue Medical Center in 2023. He has practiced there eight years. In his new role, he will oversee operations for perioperative services, one of the main service lines.

Jen Miller N'09, GS'16, N'17 *DeWitt, Neb.*, was named to the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nebraska Organization of Nursing Leadership's 40 Under 40 list in the fall of 2023. She is an assistant professor in the UNMC College of Nursing.

1990s

Katie Steinke N'90 *Pleasant Hill, Iowa*, was named one of the Top Women Leaders of Iowa for 2023. She is the chief human resources officer of Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines. Before joining FHLB Des Moines in 2021, she served as vice president, human resources, for Farm Credit Services of America in Omaha, Nebraska, and as human resources director for Glacial Lakes Energy in Watertown, South Dakota.

Gregory Tuttle D'90 Provo, Utah, published a study in 2023 about bending a dental needle. He developed a patented dental product and the TuttleNumbNow Needle Guide for this new dental injection. One of the top leaders in the industry, he has trained dentists on his system in all 50 states and 24 countries.

Larry Widman M'92, Psychiatry '96 Lincoln, Neb., joined the performance staff for the Omaha Supernovas pro volleyball team in November 2023. With more than 25 years of experience as a psychiatrist (nearly 20 as a high-performance mindset coach), he has worked with professional athletes, Olympians and elite-level college and high school athletes.

Devin Nickol M'96, Internal Medicine '99 Omaha, Neb., was a co-convenor of the American Interprofessional Health Collaborative in 2023. His leadership term will run for three years. The AIHC is the U.S. societal home for interprofessional education and the membership arm of the National Center for Interprofessional Education and Practice. He serves as a professor in the UNMC Department of Internal Medicine. ➔

Claudia Chaperon N'97, GS '05 Omaha, Neb., retired from the UNMC College of Nursing in July 2023 and gained emeritus associate professor status.

Tamra Braley N'98, '14, GS '23 Omaha, Neb., became a clinical assistant professor for the UNMC College of Nursing in 2023.

Craig Hipsher P'99 Omaha, Neb., helped start a new independent pharmacy, Precision Direct RX, in 2021.

1980s

Leigh Bertholf N'81 Signal Mountain, Tenn., retired from CommonSpirit Health on Aug. 1, 2023, after 34 years. Her most recent position was as the system senior vice president of corporate responsibility. She has permanently relocated to Signal Mountain.

Kathy Hoffman N'81 Omaha, Neb., retired from the UNMC College of Nursing in May 2023. ➔

Neal Lurz M'83 Leawood, Kan., retired in 2023 after 33 years at Diagnostic Imaging Centers.



Dr. Nickol, now leading a health collaborative.



Dr. Knoell, making a mark in research.



Hoffman, now among nursing's retirees.

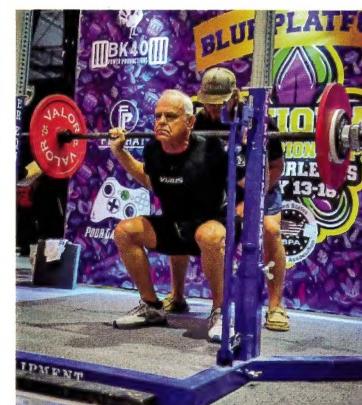


Victoria Van Roy M'89 Elkhorn, Neb., joined UNMC in December 2023, as an associate professor in the department of dermatology. She sees patients for general dermatology at Nebraska Medicine.

1970s

Marlene Wilken N'70 Omaha, Neb., received a 50 Over 50 Award in October 2023.

Paul Hansen D'75 Lenexa, Kan., competes in Master's Powerlifting. He won the National and World Championships in 2022 and 2023 for men 70 and over. All meets are sanctioned by the United States Powerlifting Association. ➔



Lynne Buchanan N'79, '83, '99 Elkhorn, Neb., was elected vice president of the Nebraska Nurses Association Board in December 2023. She will serve through 2025.

Susan Roux M'79 Carmel Valley, Calif., is a diagnostic radiologist focused on breast imaging and intervention. She is proud of having established the Carol Hatton Breast Care Center, which serves the Monterey Peninsula. In her spare time, she enjoys vacations that include bicycle tours. ➔



"I'm from New York and transitioning to Nebraska was quite an experience for me. But what stands out is how the faculty and student body welcomed me into the fold and even invited me into their homes ... Faculty truly value their students' success and make themselves accessible."

Abraham Killanin, an MD/PhD student with two years remaining in his studies toward a career in psychiatry



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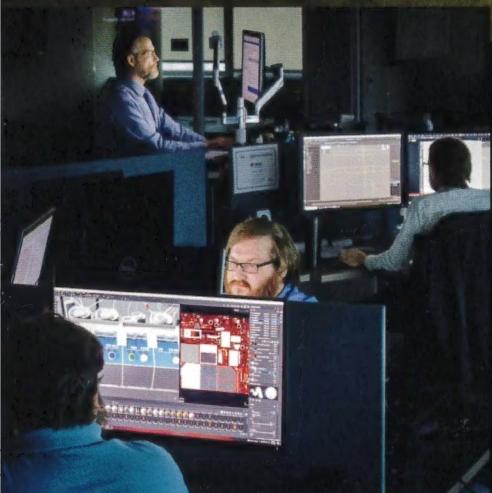
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Pam Boyers, PhD, associate vice chancellor of clinical simulation and iEXCEL